

JOSEPH CALHOUN BURNS

**AND THE 13th ALABAMA VOLUNTEER
INFANTRY REGIMENT**

THE BATTLE OF SHARPSBURG

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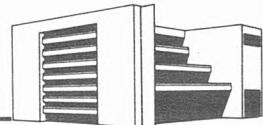
**Robert W. Burns
Academic Vice President Emeritus
San Jose State University**

A Gift From:

Hobert W. Burns

dedicated to my uncle, Mr. Norman Bluford
Burns of Lubbock, TX in memory of Joseph
Calhoun Burns and all those from Alabama
and Texas who fought in the Battle of
Sharpsburg on September 17, 1862.

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JOSEPH CALHOUN BURNS

Born February 17, 1837, in Abbeville, South Carolina.
Married to Mary Ann Elizabeth West on September 4, 1856, in
Randolph County, Alabama.
Died September 17, 1862, on the Battlefield at Sharpsburg, Maryland.

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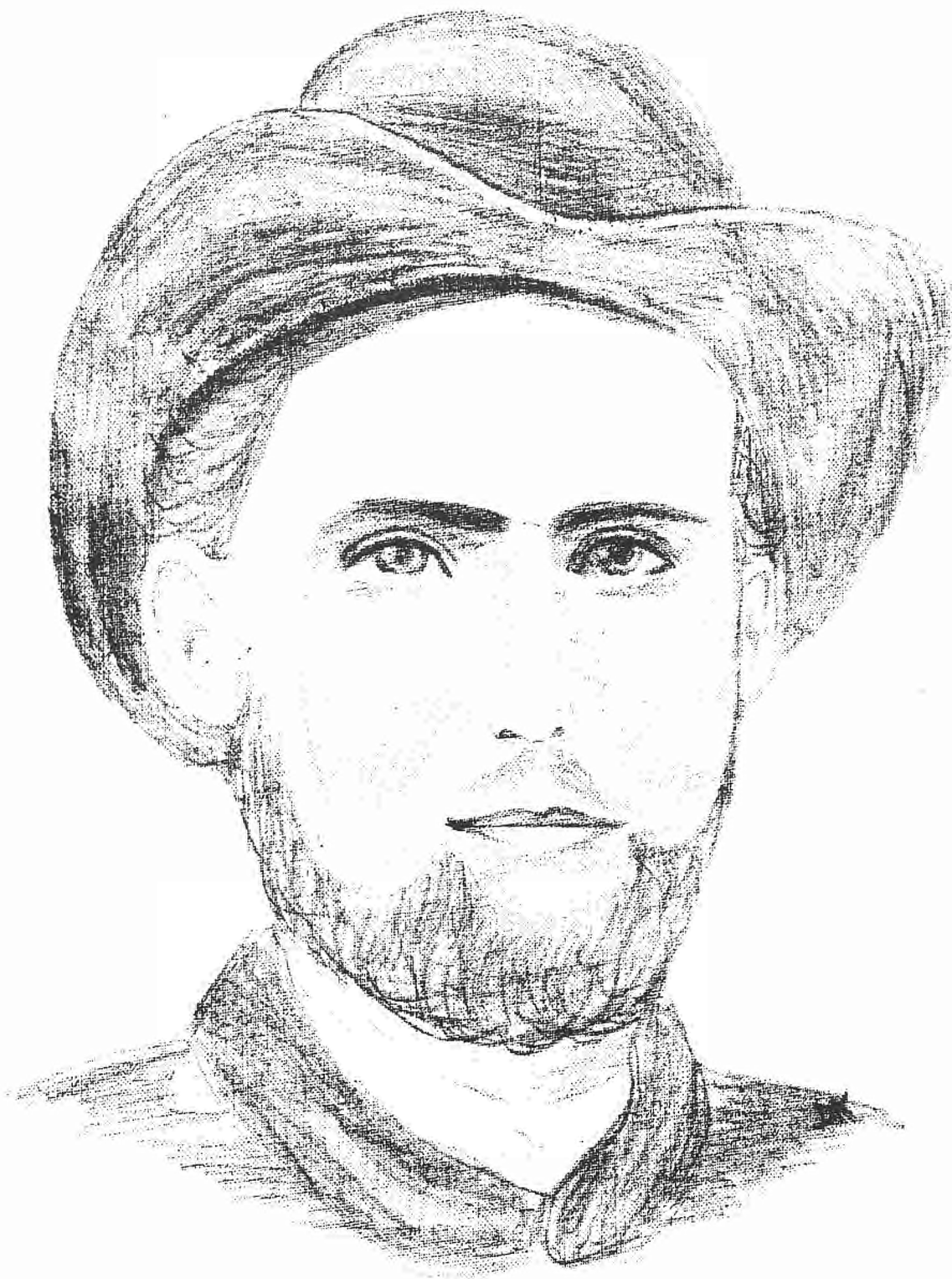
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JOSEPH CALHOUN
BURNS AND THE 13TH

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GENEALOGY



JOSEPH CALHOUN BURNS
A Sketch by Marne Dena Kirby
Commissioned by Lucy Lee Washington

FORWARD

Preface

This is the major part of a manuscript on the life of Joseph Calhoun Burns which, in turn, is part of a planned larger work on the Burns family in America descended from the "original immigrant," Edward Robertson Burns, who came to the United States from Ireland in 1820.

Joseph Calhoun Burns was the oldest son of Edward Robertson Burns and Nancy Ann Norris Mathews Burns. Little beyond statistical information is known about him, and the best hard data are found in the records of the Confederate States Army in the National Archives, Washington, D. C. These data are very limited.

Even so, the Civil War was without doubt the dramatic experience of his all too brief life and it seems appropriate -- even if the scarcity of other data did not make it necessary -- to focus on that. Too, while it may not be true that "the times make the man," it is surely true that one's life is part of and certainly conditioned by one's times. Thus some understanding of the Civil War, especially the Battle of Sharpsburg (Antietam) can help us grasp something of Joseph Calhoun Burns' foreshortened life.

Most of this manuscript is about the Battle of Sharpsburg and, in particular, the role of the 13th Alabama Volunteer Infantry Regiment in which Joseph Calhoun Burns served as a Private in Company D. **From what happened to the 13th Alabama we can reasonably infer what happened to him.** While there is no hard data at all about Joseph Calhoun Burns' actions during the Battle of Sharpsburg, other than a belated report more than a month later that he had been killed in the Battle, it takes only a little bit of imagination to realize what he must have experienced and thought the days just before the Battle and, indeed, on the day of the Battle itself.

While the manuscript is primarily factual it does, as it must, contain passages which are speculative -- some to the point of fiction -- in order to reconstruct the human dimension of Joseph Calhoun Burns' life and death, a dimension whose own factual reality is now mostly lost to history. Such passages are based on the general factual conditions of the times and what is known of others in the Confederate States Army whose experiences were in all likelihood the same as his.

Speculative material in the text is identified by such qualifying terms as "probably," "likely," "it is reasonable to say," and so on. Material which

is speculative to the point of fiction deals only with the unknowable thoughts, feelings, or actions of Joseph Calhoun Burns, and all this material is in italic typeface. Material in italics, while essentially fiction, may contain some factual information.

The narrative text is supplemented by several devices. Separate "boxes" (i.e., material appearing only from the middle to the right hand margin of a page, and in smaller, bold face type) are used to provide information relevant, if not directly pertinent, to the narrative text. Photographs, taken on September 19 through 21, 1862, shortly after the Battle of Sharpsburg, are used to give a greater sense of realism to the horror of the Battle. Maps are used to illustrate the situation before, during, and just after the Battle.

There are two kinds of footnotes in the text, lettered and numbered. Lettered footnotes refer to explanatory or elaborated comments in the Appendix, and appear in in this format: "{See A, Appendix}." Numbered footnotes are integrated with an alphabetized and enumerated bibliography in the Bibliography; the number before the colon identifies the source in the bibliography, while the number after the colon specifies the page or pages in the source, as in this format: " [24:162-163]."

It would be pretentious to "dedicate" this manuscript, but were it to be dedicated to anyone it would have to be so not only to the memory of Joseph Calhoun Burns but to those of his two younger brothers, James Thomas Burns and Edward Samuel Burns, who also fought in the Civil War.

In point of fact the manuscript was written for all the descendents of, and families related to, Edward Robertson Burns and Nancy Ann Norris Mathews Burns, especially my uncle, Norman Bluford Burns; my own children, Carol Lynne Burns Crane, Janifer Marie Burns, and Charles Rowe Burns and my grandchildren, Donna Crane, Monica Crane, and Ryan Crane (who are, in their turn, the great-great and great-great-great grandchildren of Joseph Calhoun Burns).

Norman Bluford Burns is the only surviving grandson of Joseph Calhoun Burns and his wife, Mary Ann Elizabeth West Burns. Born May 23, 1892, Norman Bluford Burns is now [in 1985] 93 years old -- and he has a mind and a memory that is little less than amazing. A wise and thoughtful man, he now lives in Lubbock, Texas.

Acknowledgments

It is trite but true, very true, to say this manuscript could not have been written without contributions of time, effort, and energy by many individuals and institutions. I am very deeply appreciative of these

contributions, and want to acknowledge them in the following alphabetical manner:

The Abbeville, South Carolina, County Court House, whose staff was unfailingly courteous and helpful as they let me rummage through old wills, property descriptions, and other documents dating from the late 1700s to the mid-1800s.

Mr. Bill Burns, of Montgomery, Alabama, a descendent of Edward Samuel Burns (the youngest brother of Joseph Calhoun Burns), whose interest and effort yielded what I had concluded was impossible to find: contemporary photographs of Edward Robertson Burns and Joseph Calhoun Burns. All must be grateful to Bill Burns for his generosity in sharing these original photographs so they could be copied and shared with so many others.

Mr. William A. Frassanito and his publisher, Charles Scribner's Sons, who were kind enough to permit me to alter somewhat and use maps which originally appeared in his very excellent book, *Antietam*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978. Copyright and used by permission.)

Mrs. Celeste Kitagawa, who for some 15 years was tolerant enough to put up with me while serving as my Executive Secretary and Office Manager in the Office of the Academic Vice President at San Jose State University. She not only typed drafts A, B, and C of this manuscript but somehow managed to communicate my often incomplete and likely incoherent requests for data to other secretaries in her office as well as to libraries. In a real sense this is Celeste's manuscript, and she knows how grateful I am to her.

The Photograph Division of the Library of Congress, whose help in identifying, locating, and copying the battle photographs which are in this manuscript was always prompt and professional.

Mr. J. Curtis Marion, of Rome, Georgia, a descendent of Edward Samuel Burns, who generously shared a photograph of Edward Samuel Burns, his wife, Sophia Sirethia Gay, and their children. The photograph of Edward Samuel Burns in this manuscript was selected out and enlarged from that family photograph, and we are all indebted to him for his kindness.

Mr. James V. Murfin and his publisher, Charles Scribner's Sons, who were kind enough to permit me to alter somewhat and use maps from his truly excellent book, *The Gleam of Bayonets*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980. Copyright and use by permission.)

The National Archives, in Washington, D. C. and in San Bruno, California, whose staff was without exception prompt and professional in offering assistance in data retrieval.

The Randolph County, Alabama, Court House, whose staff was most helpful and considerate.

Mrs. Eleanor Richardson, of the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, whose advice and assistance, in person and through the mail, was invaluable. She, who knows the material in her library as each of us might know the back of our hands, is a paragon among research librarians, and the Caroliniana is fortunate to have her talents.

The San Jose State University Library, most especially Ms. Jean Myers, of Interlibrary Loan, whose ability to find and borrow the most arcane or rare of materials is uncanny.

Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Washington, who live in Roanoke, Alabama, have been more than kind and generous with their time, effort, and sharing their home and information. Lucy Lee Washington knows more about genealogy, and about the Burns' and allied families, than I will ever know. Truly a gentlelady, and generous beyond description, she has freely shared her data with me, including the paper-and-pencil sketch of Joseph Calhoun Burns which appears in this manuscript. Words are inadequate to express my gratitude to Cliff and Lucy Lee Washington.

Even in the face of this invaluable assistance I have no doubt made errors of fact, of interpretation, and of judgment in the narrative text, and for these I apologize -- if I knew what they were I would, of course, have eliminated them. I invite corrections.

Finally, let me also invite letters, comments, information and photographs from those who may read this manuscript. Stories, anecdotes, facts, and photographs about the following families

Benefield	Marion	Shelnut
Bradley	Mathews	Stitt
Brough	McClendon	Traylor
Burns	Montgomery	Webb
Bynum	Moore	West
Calhoun	Parker	Wilson
Gay	Parks	

which lived in either or both Abbeville County, South Carolina (ca. 1810

through 1860) or Randolph County, Alabama (ca. 1840 through the present) would be especially welcome, and all original material (e.g., photographs) will of course be returned.

Hobert W. Burns, Jr.
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Palo Alto, CA 94301

October 1985

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JOSEPH CALHOUN BURNS AND THE 13th ALABAMA

THE BATTLE OF SHARPSBURG

The Meaning of the Battle

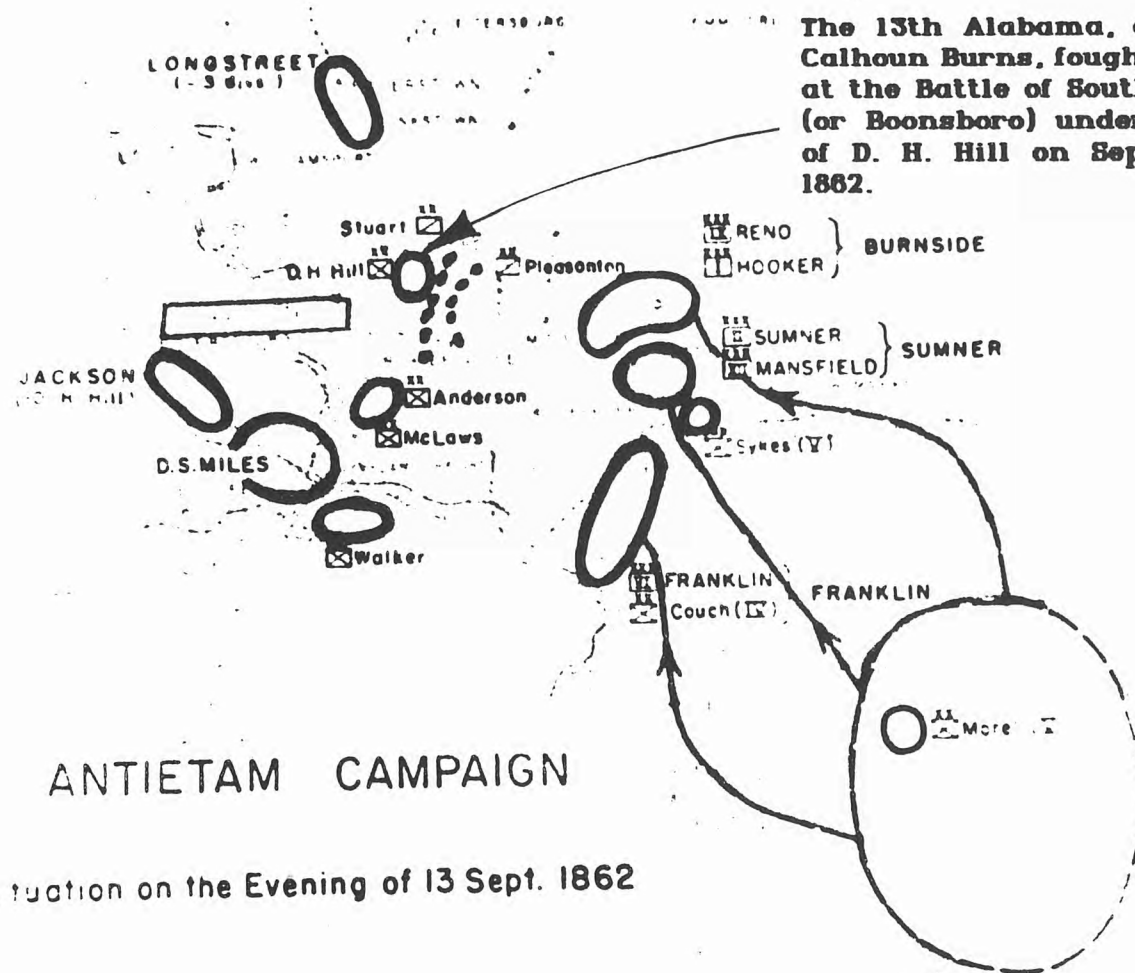
During the dim hours before dawn on September 4, 1862, General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia began to cross the Potomac River, moving from Virginia into Maryland for the first time. {See Map 1, "Situation on the Evening of 13 September 1862" and Map 2, "Antietam (Sharpsburg) and Vicinity", on the next two pages.} It was to end fourteen days later at the little town of Sharpsburg, nestled between the Potomac and Antietam Creek, in the single bloodiest day in the history of American warfare, a day which changed the course of American history.

Four days earlier, On August 30, Lee had defeated Major General John Pope in the Battle of Bull Run at Manassas Junction {See A, Appendix}, only thirty miles from the Federal capital at Washington. On the strength of that victory Lee and President Jefferson Davis determined to carry the war to the North. One of their hopes was to threaten, perhaps capture, Philadelphia or Baltimore, thus earning diplomatic recognition for the Confederate States of America from England or France, perhaps both, and so lay the basis for the achievement of their war aims: an early, negotiated peace which would result in a United States of America in the North and a Confederate States of America in the South.

The Army of Northern Virginia and Joseph Calhoun Burns

Mention of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, Major General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's Corps, Major General Daniel H. Hill's Division, Brigadier General A. H. Colquitt's Brigade, or Colonel Birkett D. Fry's Regiment (the 13th Alabama) all imply a reference to Joseph Calhoun Burns as he was a Private in Company D, 13th Alabama Infantry Regiment.

Their hopes were not unrealistic. Since the bombardment of Fort Sumter, South Carolina, on April 12, 1861, the Rebels had more than held their own against the Yankees. They had military advantage and momentum, and their diplomats were pressing their case in the capitals of Europe [58:30, 22-14].



LONGSTREET

- McLaws
- Anderson
- D. R. Jones
- Walker
- Hood

JACKSON

- Lawton
- A. P. Hill
- J. R. Jones
- D. H. Hill

- HEINTZMAN
- SIGEL

PENNSYLVANIA

■ GETTYSBURG

WEST VIRGINIA

MARYLAND

■ HAGERSTOWN

■ EMMITSBURG

■ BOONSBORO

■ SOUTH MOUNTAIN

■ FREDERICK

■ ANTIETAM

■ HARPERS

■ FERRY

■ POINT OF ROCKS

■ BALTIMORE

■ WINCHESTER

■ LEESBURG

■ ROCKVILLE

■ WASHINGTON

■ CENTREVILLE

■ BULL RUN

■ MANASSAS

■ WARRENTON

■ SULPHUR SPRINGS

■ CULPEPER

■ CEDAR MOUNTAIN

■ FREDERICKSBURG

■ BARBOURSVILLE

■ CHARLOTTESVILLE

VIRGINIA

ANTIETAM (SHARPSBURG) AND VICINITY

■ RICHMOND

■ CUMBERLAND

■ LANDING

■ FAIR OAKS

■ SAVAGE'S

■ STATION

■ MALVERN HILL

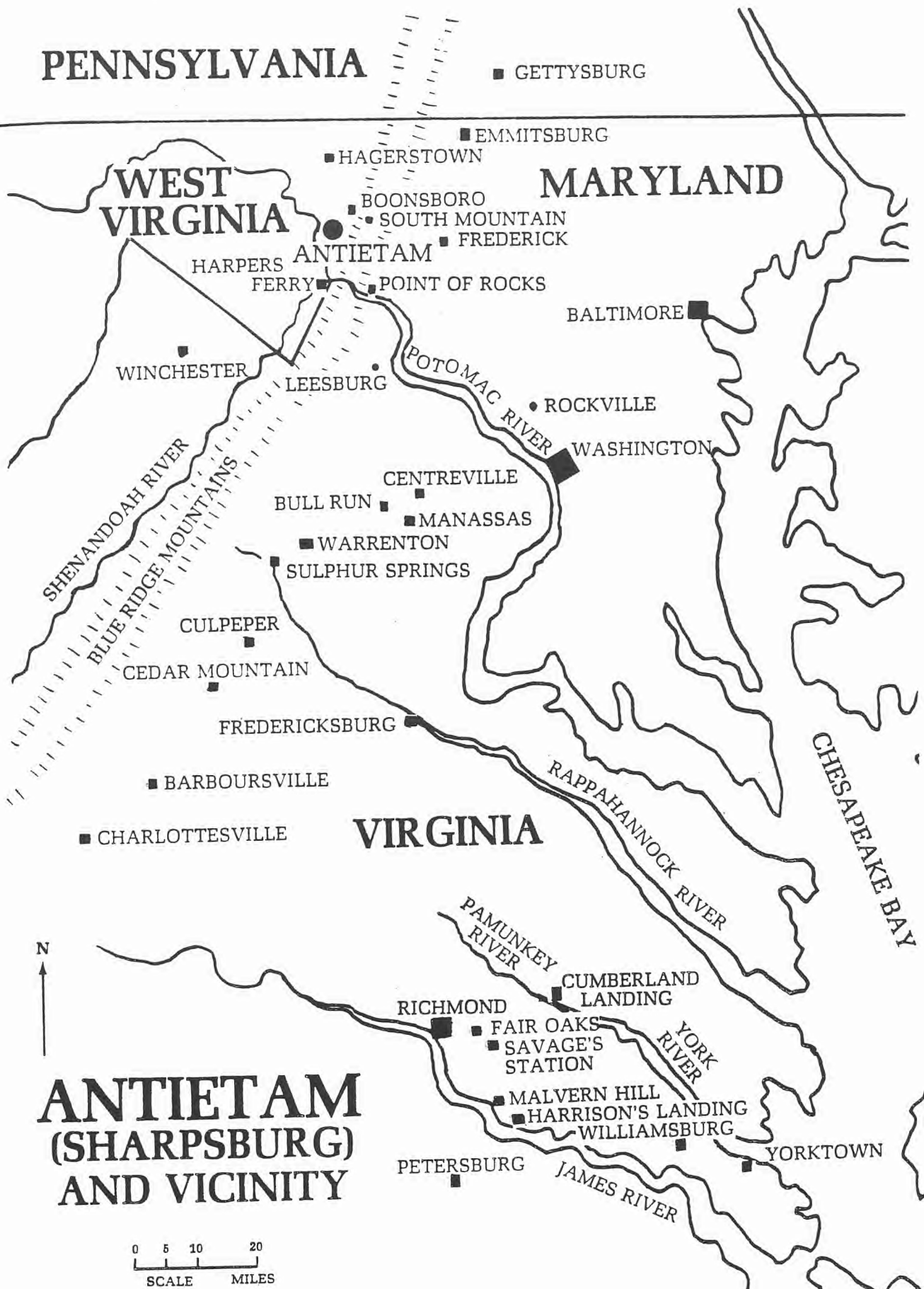
■ HARRISON'S LANDING

■ WILLIAMSBURG

■ PETERSBURG

■ YORKTOWN

0 5 10 20
SCALE MILES



Even though he and his Whigs had been unfriendly to the Southern Cause, as the doctrine of States' rights entailed the "peculiar institution" of slavery, England's Prime Minister, the Viscount Palmerston, was beginning to waver in the face of public opinion and pressure from the opposition Tory party [31:104].

On September 14, 1862, on hearing of the Rebel victory at Second Manassas, Palmerston wrote to his Foreign Minister, Lord Russell, suggesting England and France might ". . . address [both the United and Confederate States of America] and recommend an arrangement upon the basis of separation" [58:30, 22-14]. On September 17, the very day the Battle of Sharpsburg was being fought, albeit unknownst to him, Russell told Palmerston he agreed that England should propose to President Abraham Lincoln that the United States give its ". . . recognition to the Independence of the Confederates" and, if the United States failed to do so, that ". . . we [in England] ourselves ought to recognize the Southern States as an independent [nation]" [58:30, 22-14]. England was not alone in considering diplomatic recognition of the Confederate States of America. Emperor Napoleon III committed France to such action if England would do so jointly and lobbied for that end with members of England's Parliament [31:105].

The firm and continuing existence of the Confederate States of America seemed to need but one or two more military victories, to prove to the North it could not impose its will on the South by force of arms, and to European powers that it had the will and the strength of resist, secede, and separate from the United States. Thus Davis and Lee agreed the time was right to cross the Potomac, and three days after his victory at Second Manassas, Lee on September 3rd revealed to the generals of his Army of Northern Virginia the decision to cross the Potomac and invade the North.

The crossing started on the 4th; by September 6th Lee, with Major Generals Thomas ("Stonewall") Jackson, James Longstreet, James ("Jeb") Stuart, and Daniel Harvey Hill, had established headquarters near Frederick, Maryland. By the next day the Army of Northern Virginia was in Maryland.

On September 8th Lee revealed specific battle plans to his general staff, which involved a still-debated decision to divide his Army in order to capture Harper's Ferry and Hagerstown in Maryland, and Harrisburg in Pennsylvania, before moving, as events might determine, on Baltimore or Philadelphia.

The next day, September 9th, he wrote his Special Order 191, detailing all his plans, which was destined shortly to be delivered into the enemy's hands, and on September 10th his Army was divided, broke camp, and moved off in separate directions.

Three days later, on September 13th, Lee's Special Order 191 had been lost, found about noon-time by Private Barton Mitchell of the Union's 27th Indiana Regiment, and delivered about 2:00 P.M. to the commander of the Army of the Potomac, Major General George Brinton McClellan.

Just how Lee's detailed plans came into McClellan's hands -- whether it was carelessness on the part of General D. H. Hill, or on the part of a dispatch rider, or treason in the ranks of the Rebels -- is still a matter of debate and mystery {See B, Appendix}.

By 6:00 P.M. the ever-cautious McClellan decided the copy of Lee's order was genuine and he decided to move his Union troops so as to encircle Lee's separated forces and reduce them separately. Two hours later he revealed to a group of Maryland businessmen both his good fortune and his own intentions and, two hours after that, by 10:00 P.M., a Southern sympathizer among those businessmen had informed Lee that his plans were known to McClellan. Lee, not as indecisive as McClellan, immediately issued orders for the reunification of his Army at Sharpsburg.

The following day, September 14th, McClellan caught up with Lee's rear guard near Boonsboro, at Turner's Gap in the Catoctin Mountains, where the Battle of South Mountain was fought. The 13th Alabama, and Joseph Calhoun Burns, were in this battle.

By September 16th most of Lee's Army was at Sharpsburg, as were advance elements of McClellan's, and Lee decided to fight there on the Antietam Creek, rather than retreat into Virginia. By noon "Stonewall" Jackson arrived at Antietam after capturing Harper's Ferry, and by the evening of September 16th Lee had some 30,000 of the 35,255 Rebels who were to fight at Sharpsburg, while McClellan had all but a few of the 87,164 Yankees who were to be there {See C, Appendix}.

Within the next twelve hours over 5,000 Americans would be killed or missing in action and another 18,000 wounded; and neither before nor since has the nation ever suffered over 23,000 casualties in a single day of warfare {See D, Appendix}. It was indeed America's bloodiest day.

Nightfall saw the silence of guns, with neither side in control of the

battlefield, but with the Confederates by far the more weakened even though they had inflicted as much damage as they suffered.

Lee was prepared to renew the battle the next day, against even greater odds, but McClellan -- who no doubt could have then on September 18th destroyed Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, and soon put an end to the Confederacy -- did not attack. During the night of the 18th Lee slipped back across the Potomac and back into Virginia, thus ending the Battle of Sharpsburg.

McClellan should and could have won, but did not. Lee should and could have lost, but did not. Thus, tactically or militarily, Sharpsburg was a draw.

But on all other counts -- strategic, political, and diplomatic -- it proved to be a great victory, perhaps the most important victory, for the Union.

Strategically, Lee had failed to carry the war to the North and after Sharpsburg he was in about the same geographic position as before, but weaker militarily, and on the defensive rather than offensive.

Politically, President Lincoln used Sharpsburg as reason to issue the (first) Emancipation Proclamation {See E, Appendix}, which clearly changed the purposes of the war from whatever they were into the simple one of slavery versus human rights, and in that one master stroke Lincoln brought world opinion to the side and the cause of the North.

Diplomatically, the stalemate at Sharpsburg cost the Confederacy any chance of recognition by, and economic support from, England, thus dooming the hope and plan for an early, negotiated end to the war and legitimization of the Confederacy {See F, Appendix}.

It can fairly be said that the Southern cause was lost at, and because of, the Battle of Sharpsburg.

It was in the service of this lost cause, though he knew it not and would not have believed it, that Joseph Calhoun Burns crossed over Antietam Creek on September 15 and gave his life on September 17, 1862.

Joseph Calhoun Burns
Private, Company D, 13th Alabama
Regiment

Born February 17, 1837, in Abbeville, South Carolina, he was the first child of Edward R. and Nancy Burns. He had a fair complexion, light hair, gray eyes, and was 5' 9" tall.

On July 19, 1861, he and a younger brother, James Thomas Burns, enlisted in the 13th Alabama Volunteer Infantry Regiment, at Montgomery, Alabama. He fought at the Battles of Yorktown, Williamsburg, Seven Pines (where brother James Thomas Burns was mortally wounded), Mechanicsville, Gaines' Mill, Malvern Hill, the Seven Days Battle, Cedar Mountain, and South Mountain before being killed at Sharpsburg on September 17, 1862.

Before his enlistment he married Mary Ann Elizabeth West on September 4, 1856. They had three children, William Ephriam Burns (born January 22, 1858-died July 21, 1915), Joseph E. Burns (born December 22, 1860-died ?), and Mary Roseanna Jane (born November 17, 1862-died December 14, 1932).

After his death his widow, who was born June 26, 1841, married John C. Murphy in 1871 and had five more children. She lived to be 103 years old, dying on August 2, 1944.

The Days Before the Battle of Sharpsburg

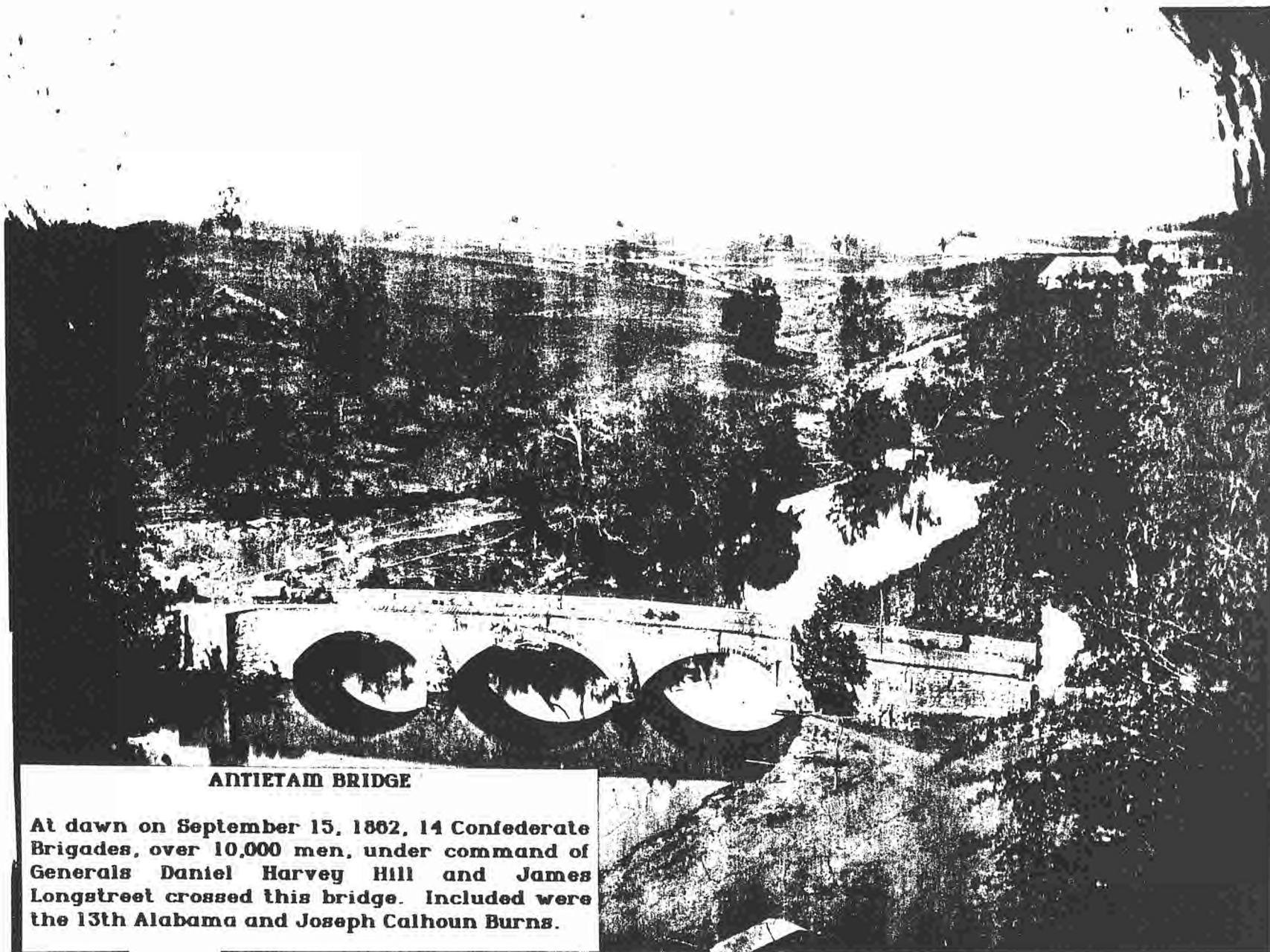
Shortly after dawn on Monday, September 15, after a five hour forced march of some ten miles from South Mountain, ". . . fourteen Confederate infantry brigades, totaling more than ten thousand men . . . [moved] westward along the Boonsboro Pike and crossed Antietam Creek. . ." [36:80] on the way to the town of Sharpsburg, Maryland. {See Photograph 1, "Antietam Bridge," and Map 3, "The Antietam Battlefield," on the next two pages.}

Major General Daniel Harvey Hill's "Division was the first to cross the creek about daylight" [65:200], ". . . in a line a mile long" [36:80], perhaps led by the tested and proven, but sore and weary, veterans of the 13th Alabama Regiment.

Hill's Division

Major General Daniel Harvey Hill's Division consisted of five infantry brigades. They and their commanders at the Battle of Sharpsburg were:

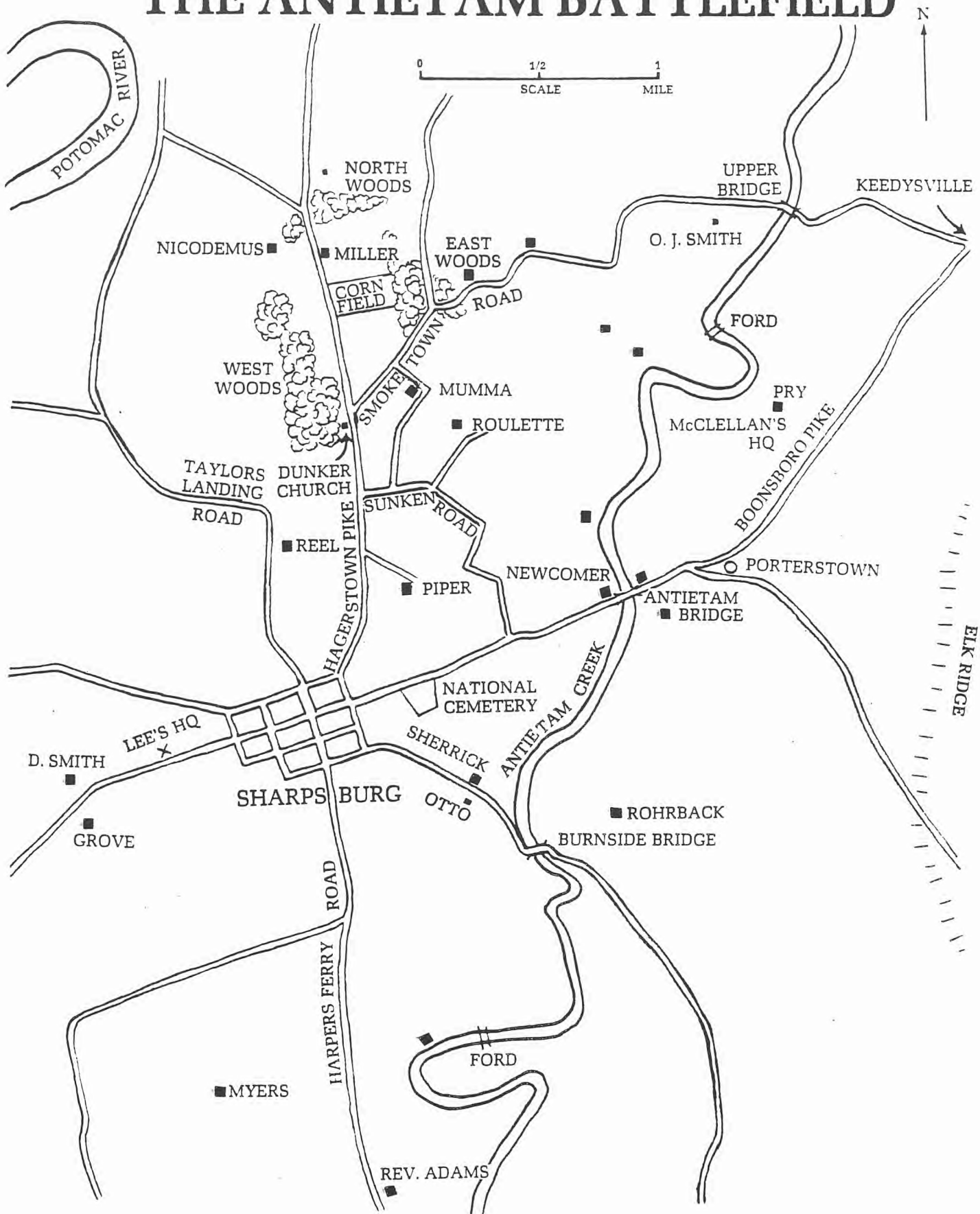
1. Colquitt's Brigade, Colonel Alfred H. Colquitt commanding (this Brigade included the 13th Alabama and, in turn, Private Joseph Calhoun Burns).
2. Garland's Brigade, Colonel D. K. McRae commanding.
3. Ripley's Brigade,



ANTIETAM BRIDGE

At dawn on September 15, 1862, 14 Confederate Brigades, over 10,000 men, under command of Generals Daniel Harvey Hill and James Longstreet crossed this bridge. Included were the 13th Alabama and Joseph Calhoun Burns.

THE ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD



Brigadier General Roswell S. Ripley commanding.
 4. Rodes' Brigade, Brigadier General Robert S. Rodes commanding.
 5. Anderson's Brigade, Brigadier General G. B. Anderson commanding.

While no doubt pleased to be "off the mountain," where he had helped the 13th Alabama delay the advance of General McClellan's Army of the Potomac through South Mountain by fighting the 1st Division {See G, Appendix} of Major General Joseph Hooker's I Army Corps to a standstill, Joseph Calhoun Burns must have been a little apprehensive crossing the Middle Bridge as the rising sun behind him reflected off the early mist in the air and made the light dance on rippling waters as he glanced at the Antietam below him.

That same diffracted light illuminated the town of Sharpsburg, now only a mile and one-tenth away, as he and Rebel comrades-in-arms of General Colquitt's Brigade stepped from the bridge back onto the Pike. His apprehension must have grown with each step toward Sharpsburg, for he knew that Colquitt's and Rode's brigades had been ordered by Major Generald Thomas Jonathan Jackson -- "Stonewall" Jackson himself -- to rush to Sharpsburg

. . . to expell the Union Cavalry which had
 escaped from Harper's Ferry [before Jackson captured
 it on September 15, that] . . . cavalry having moved . . .
 in the direction of Hagerstown [via Sharpsburg] [6:1]

and which might yet be in or near Sharpsburg.

Colquitt's Brigade

Colonel Alfred E. Colquitt's Brigade consisted of five infantry regiments. They and their commanders were:

1. 13th Alabama, Colonel Birkett Davenport Fry, commanding. (Private Joseph Calhoun Burns was in Company D of this regiment.)
2. 6th Georgia, Lieutenant Colonel James M. Newton, commanding.
3. 23rd Georgia, Lieutenant Colonel W. P. Barclay, commanding.
4. 27th Georgia, Colonel Levi B. Smith, commanding.
5. 28th Georgia, Major Tully Graybill, commanding.

13th Alabama Regiment {See H, Appendix}

Colonel Birkett D. Fry's Regiment consisted of ten companies. They, their company "nicknames," and their commanders were:

Company A, "Alabama River Rangers" from Wilcox County, Captain Reginald H. Dawson, commanding.

Company B, "Southern Stars" from Macon County, Captain William H. Betts, commanding.

Company C, "Alabama Borderers" from Coosa County, Captain Walter J. Taylor, commanding.

Company D, "Randolph Mountaineers" from Randolph County, Captain A. Sydney Reaves, commanding. Joseph Calhoun Burns was a Private in this Company.

Company E, "Randolph Rangers" from Randolph County, Captain Manora D. Robison, commanding.

Company F, "Tallassee [Tallahassee?] Guards" from Tallapoosa County, Captain James V. Ashurst, commanding.

Company G, "Yancey Guards" from Butler County, Captain Robert N. Cook, commanding.

Company H, "Coosa Mountaineers" from Coosa County, Captain Stephen R. Allison, commanding.

Company I, "Roanoke Invincibles" from Randolph County, Captain John T. Smith, commanding.

[The writer can find no record of a Company J.]

Company K, "Stephens Guards" from Randolph County, Captain Obadiah Whitaker, commanding.

Joseph Calhoun Burns was tired and hungry, as were others in the 13th Alabama and all 3,000 men in Hill's Division. They had good reason, as they had

. . . in about eight weeks marched from Richmond to Frederick, Md. [and further]; had fought and won the battles of Cedar Creek, Second Manassas, Chantilly, Harper's Ferry, South Mountain -- though not successful in holding the passes of the latter . . . they [withdrew] to Sharpsburg with a record that never before has been claimed of any army in an enemy's country [62:211].

Their own General Hill, not one to waste time writing reports and

certainly not one to offer gratuitous praise, said that "Colquitt's [Brigade] had fought well" at South Mountain, even after

The division had marched all the way from Richmond and [suffered from] heavy marches, deficient commissariat, want of shoes, and inefficient officers [93:1021-1022].

General Hill went on to say

We retreated that night [September 14], having accomplished all that was required -- the delay of the Yankee army until Harper's Ferry could [be captured by Jackson] We reached Sharpsburg about daylight on the morning of the 15th [93:1021-1022].

No wonder these Rebels were tired and hungry, and no wonder that, as one of them said later,

In the march along the turnpike there was not left a ear of corn, or a green aple, in the bordering fields; the soldiery made a speciality of cooking these vegetables, eating them raw, roasted, boiled, and all mixed in a kind of soup, filling themselves full, but still longing for the meat and bread diet [48:511].

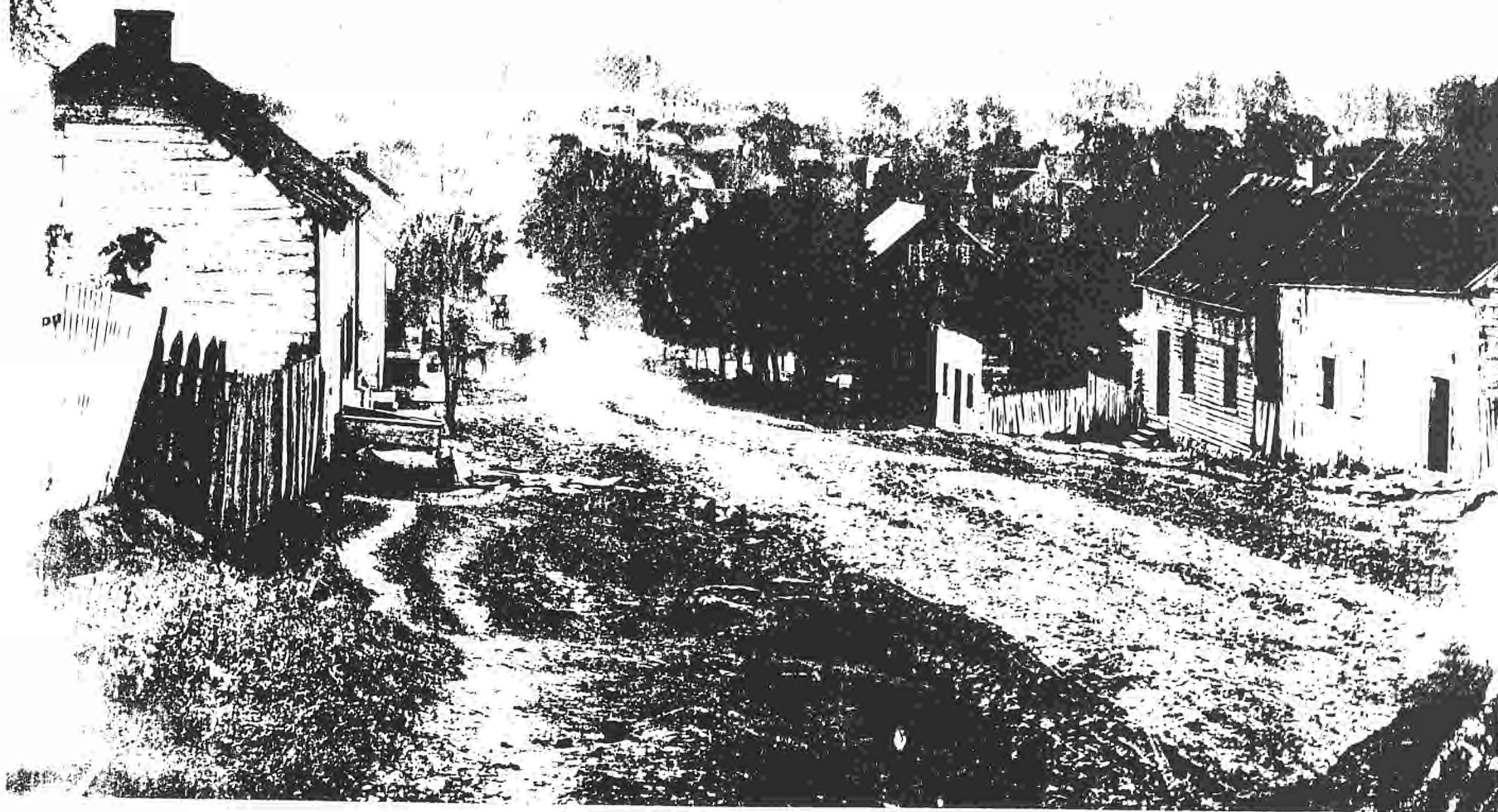
As the three other brigades of Hill's Division paused short of the town and spread out in the farm lands between the town and Antietam Creek, Colquitt and Rodes advanced down the Pike, entered Sharpsburg, and marched right through the town on Main Street {See Photographs 2 and 3, "Main Street, Sharpsburg, September 21," on next two pages}.

A veteran of the battle remembers Sharpsburg as

. . . a little village nestling at the bottom of the hills, a simple country hamlet, that none outside, save perhaps a postmaster, ever heard of before, and yet which in one day awoke to find itself famous, and the hills around it historic. This tiny town was a quiet, cool, still place -- like the locality where Rip Van Winkle lived his days. One could almost imagine he saw the shambling figure, followed by his dog, disappear up the far street, and from just such a casement Dame Gretchen must have fired her farewell shot at her lazy, good-for-nothing spouse [49:10].

MAIN STREET, SHARPSBURG, MARYLAND
(View to the West)

The 13th Alabama, and Joseph Calhoun Burns, marched over this street on September 15, 1862, two days before the Battle of Sharpsburg.





**MAIN STREET
SHARPSBURG, MARYLAND
(View to the West)**

One wonders if Joseph Calhoun Burns described it that way in a letter to his young wife, Mary Ann Elizabeth West Burns, back home in Wedowee.

Mary Ann Elizabeth West Burns

Born June 26, 1841, in Morgan County, Georgia, she was one of the fourteen children of Ephriam West and Lucinda McClendon.

Sometime in the period 1849-1851 the Wests moved to Randolph County, Alabama, where Mary Ann met and, in 1856, married Joseph Calhoun Burns. She was 15 and he 19 when married at Green's Chapel in a Methodist ceremony.

After the death of Joseph Calhoun Burns on September 17, 1862, she married John Carol Murphy in 1871. This marriage produced five children. She died August 2, 1944, in Roanoke, Alabama, at the age of 103. [See the *Birmingham News* of December 6, 1936, and the *Anniston Star* of June 29, 1937, for interviews with her.]

Probably not; the Scotch-Irish were more inclined to plain, simple language than to such prose. But surely he wrote home, not only because he loved and missed Mary Ann and his parents, but because

Most Rebs enjoyed writing letters. The new world that was unfolded to them by travel to remote places, by association with many different kinds of peoples, and by contact with the horror of battle, gave them thrills and shocks that demanded expression. . . . Never in the history of the South has there been such a tide of letter writing as that . . . raised by the Confederate War. . . . It is significant that during the Confederacy a large portion of the middle and lower strata of Southern society became articulate for the first time [98:192]

We will never know what he wrote to Mary Ann or his parents for all his correspondence, like that of his brothers, James T. and Edward S., is apparently lost. Yet it is reasonable to think that one of his letters to Mary Ann might have been similar to one written by another Rebel to his wife:

Dear Wife: i take the opitunity to . . . let you now that i am well an i hope these few lines may . . . find you injoying the same blesson. . . . I dont now when will see you i want to see you very bad write to me . . . i send my best love to you and mark [the name

of their son] cis [kiss] mark for me . . . tell mother i am well and I wold like to see her varry well tel her to write to me . . . Dear wife my ink is pail my pen is bad my love to you shall never fail god bless you . . . i must come to a close remain you husband ontell death . . . remember me God bless . . . [98:206].

Perhaps Joseph Calhoun Burns wrote something like that shortly after the 13th Alabama, looking like a bunch of tattered scare-crows, reached Sharpsburg. Or perhaps his letter to Mary Ann was like the one an acquaintance of his in the 13th Alabama, Peter Wyche, wroto to his wife:

Wife, I received the clothing you sent me, and was thankful for them for there are nothing here scarcely, -- no clothing here, nor anything else . . . We have not drawn any money yet [for soldiers' pay] nor don't know when we will. If it was not for our wives and friends in olde Alabama I don't know what would become of us. . . [100:6].

They were all tattered. The Rebels looked like rabble. If there is any truism about General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia it is probably that it didn't look like an army -- until it fought. Despite the predominant gray uniform, Lee's men also wore butternut, brown, and even captured blue Union uniforms, as well as mixed or no uniforms at all. Silver buckles, brass buttons, and leather belts on the Rebels were as rare as Union victories in 1862, and compared to the well-drilled, well-equipped, commonly uniformed Union troops the Confederates looked and marched like a rabble.

So it was as Colquitt's and Rodes' men marched through Sharpsburg: bedrolls slung over this shoulder or that; guns carried in this hand or that, and held any old way; their slouch hats, if any, pushed forward, backward, or sideways; and in no order of step, rank, file, or column that by the widest stretch of imagination could be called "military order."

Long afterward a Confederate veteran wryly confessed that he and his fellows were indeed "a set of ragamuffins," and said that "it seemed as if every cornfield in Maryland had been robbed of its scarecrows." Digging into his memory, the veteran became specific:

"None had any under-clothing. My costume consisted of a ragged pair of trousers, a stained, dirty jacket; and old slouch hat, the brim pinned up with a thorn; a begrimed blanket over my

shoulder, a grease-smeared cotton haversack full of apples and corn, a cartridge box full, and a musket. I was barefooted and had a stone bruise on each foot . . . There was no one there who would not have been 'run in' by the police had he appeared on the streets of any populous city" [50:40].

So the Army of Northern Virginia was not much to look at; yet it was something special to meet. Lacking all else, it still had those cartridge boxes and muskets, it knew just how to use them, and extreme hardship had swept away everybody except the men who could stand anything [19:4 27].

It is very likely that Joseph Calhoun Burns and friends in the 13th Alabama looked no different than any other as they moved through the town. They knew by now that most Marylanders favored the Union and not the Confederacy, which was not what President Jefferson Davis and General Lee anticipated when they made the decision to cross the Potomac, but they had little idea how their bedraggled appearance would shock Marylanders. The Marylanders' surprise at seeing such a rag-tag army was expressed in an intercepted letter written by one Maryland woman to another:

Frederick City, Maryland
September 13, 1862

I wish, my dearest Minnie, you could have witnessed the transit of the Rebel army through our streets a day or two ago. Their coming was unheralded by any pomp and pageant whatever. No bursts of martial music greeted your ear, no thundering sound of canon, no brilliant staff, no glittering cortege dashed through the streets, instead came three long dirty columns, that kept on in an unceasing flow. I could scarcely believe my eyes; was this body of men moving so smoothly along, with no order, their guns carried in every fashion, no two dressed alike, their officers hardly distinguishable from the privates -- were these, I asked myself in amazement, were these dirty, lank, ugly specimens of humanity, with shocks of hair sticking through the holes in their hats, and the dust thick on their dirty faces, the men that had coped and encountered successfully, and driven back again, and again our splendid legions with their fine discipline, their martial show and colour, their solid battalions keeping each perfect time to the inspiring bands of

music? I must confess, Minnie, that I felt humiliated at the thought that this horde of ragamuffins could set our grand army of the Union at defiance. Why it seems as if a single regiment of our gallant boys in blue could drive that dirty crew in the river without any trouble. And then, too, I wish you could see how they behaved -- a crowd of boys on a holiday don't seem happier. They are on the broad grin all the time. Oh! they are so dirty! I don't think the Potomac river could wash them clean; and ragged! -- there is not a scarecrow in the corn-fields that would not scorn to exchange clothes with them; and so tattered! -- there isn't a decently dressed soldier in their whole army. I saw some strikingly handsome faces though; or, rather, they would have been so if they could have had a good scrubbing. They were very polite, I must confess, and always asked for a drink of water, or anything else, and never think of coming inside of a door without an invitation. Many of them were bare-footed. Indeed, I felt sorry for the poor, misguided wretches, for some were limping along so painfully, trying hard to keep with their comrades. But I must stop. I send this by Robert, and hope it will reach you safely. Write to me as soon as the route is open . . .

Kate [48:508-509]

Such a letter would have disappointed Davis and Lee. They thought the citizens of Maryland, a slave state though loyal to the Union, would welcome their "sothren brethen" in the Army of Northern Virginia to Maryland. They were wrong, but not entirely so: Lee's troops were welcomed in Hagerstown (which town later provided consecrated burial ground for many Rebels who fell at Sharpsburg) but in Frederick they were, if not opposed, scorned.

One private in the Rebel ranks remembered in 1892 a sample of the scorn given them in Frederick thirty years earlier:

We halted a minute or two in front of a door in which stood a very pretty woman, wearing an apron of the United States colors. . . She eyed me for a minute or so, and then, in the most contemptuous way, with a sneer on her face, said to me, "You are a nice specimen, you miserable ragamuffin rebel!" What impressed me. . . was the spirit she manifested, the "rebel" army, as

she called it, in possession of the city [Frederick] and she perfectly defiant. [10:303]

Alexander Hunter, a veteran of Lee's battles in Maryland recalled over forty years later that in September 1862 he and other "Johnny Rebs"

With a rush and a swing we passed through the "royal" city of Frederick, where we got scant welcome, up the dusty and broad pike northward to Hagerstown, where the people received the ragged "Rebs" as if [we] we belted knights, with victory on [our] plumes. Here every soldier got as much as he could eat. [50:39]

And again:

The actions of the citizens of Hagerstown showed in vivid contrast to Frederick City, for not only were the men and women outspoken in their sympathy for the Southern cause, but they threw wide open their hospitable doors and filled their houses with the soldiers, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, as well as their limited means allowed. I saw a citizen in that place absolutely take the shoes off of his feet, in the streets, and give them to a limping, bare-footed soldier. [48:511]

Shabbily dressed though he surely was, Joseph Calhoun Burns was not much shabbier than "Stonewall" Jackson. One of Jackson's officers said Union Brigadier General Julius White was ". . . resplendent in full dress uniform with 'untarnished' sabre, white gloves, and polished boots. . ." [65:202] when he surrendered Harper's Ferry to Jackson, and was taken aback

. . . to find in General Jackson the worst-dressed, worst-mounted, most faded and dingy-looking general he had ever seen anyone surrender to, with a staff not much for looks or equipment. [30:162]

Not only was the Yankee officer's pride tarnished by the need to yield to the seedy "Stonewall," so too did "Stonewall"'s appearance offend the civilized taste of a Yankee newspaper correspondent:

He [Jackson] was dressed in the coarsest kind of homespun, seedy and dirty at that; wore an old hat

which any Northern beggar would consider an insult. . . and in his general appearance was in no respect to be distinguished from the mongrel, bare-footed men who followed his fortunes. [74:312]

Clothes do not make the man, then or now, especially the soldiering man, as both General "Stonewall" Jackson and Private Joseph Calhoun Burns knew. But there was one important difference in the dress of General Jackson and Private Burns: the former had boots, worn and dusty as they might have been, while the latter was likely barefooted, as were so many Rebel soldiers.

A private soldier, Jno. E. Crow, recalled in 1892 that in 1862,

In crossing the Potomac I lost my shoes, and went through the Maryland campaign barefooted. Those of us in this deplorable fix had not only to contend with the sore and tender bottoms of our feet, but our feet were also sunburned and blistered on top, which was equally painful. . . I was in dilapidated condition indeed. My cap had no brim. The sleeves of my jacket were worn out and ragged. [10:303]

He was not alone, for ". . . thousands of Lee's men were shoeless . . . just before the historic crossing into Maryland" [88:2] and, as an Alabama veteran of that crossing and the Battle of Sharpsburg remembers,

We marched all day and all night . . . into Maryland. A march of three [more] miles and we were in front of the enemy at Antietam, near the village of Sharpsburg. . .

Hundreds, yes thousands, were barefooted. . . [51:8]

The Rebels were short of everything except a fighting spirit: food, clothes, soap, blankets, and fuel.

But the most pervasive and the most keenly felt of all deficiencies was that of shoes. The Rebel army was a walking army. . . .

[The] shortage of shoes began to trouble generals and government officials before the war was a year

old. . . .

Shortly before Lee began his march into Maryland [it was] estimated that forty thousand pairs of shoes were needed by the army. . . [and] there can be no doubt that thousands of Rebs failed to participate in the [Battle of Sharpsburg] because the condition of their feet made it impossible dfor them. . . It may easily be true that the difference between a victory and a draw for Lee at Antietam was his want of a few thousand pairs of shoes. [98:119, 120; underscoring in original text.]

The shod and unshod in Colquitt's and Rodes' battalions, some limping, continued through and past Sharpsburg, almost to the Potomac. But there was no sign of Union cavalry or troops, so they turned around and marched back into town -- surely in hope of finding a spot to rest and something to eat. Joseph Calhoun Burns was even more tired and hungry.

He, like everyone else, brought a complaining stomach with him into Sharpsburg. For days he, like everyone else, had eaten little at all and most of that little consisted of corn on the cob -- "roasting ears," as they called them -- and the thought of getting some solid food, meat!, bread and fresh vegetables from the townspeople and farmers must have heartened him and his comrades.

One Reb remembered that

We were hungry, for six days not a morsel of bread or meat had gone in our stomachs -- and our menu consisted of apples and corn. We toasted, we burned, we stewed, we boiled, we roasted these two together, and singly, until there was not a man whose form had not caved-in, and who had a bad attack of diarrhoea. Our under-clothes were foul and hanging in strips, our socks worn out, and half of the men were bare-footed, many were lame and were sent to the rear; others of sterner stuff, hobbled along and managed to keep up. . . [48:507]

and that hunger is why

In our march along the turnpike, there was not left a ear of corn, or a green apple, in the bordering

fields; the soldiery made a speciality of cooking these vegetables, eating them raw, roasted, boiled, and all mixed in a kind of soup, filling themselves full, but still longing for the meat and bread diet. [48:511]

The fare of roasting ears and apples was not restricted to Joseph Calhoun Burns and other troops, as a messenger sent to Jackson reported that when he ". . . reached the General he was eating green corn from the cob which he had just gotten in a field near by." [76:69] But the "Maryland Dutch" of Sharpsburg, while not overtly hostile to the Johnny Rebs who'd come to their town, were not friendly either -- and very reluctant to accept either the Confederate money or script which they had. The Rebels were not supposed to take or confiscate food, or goods of any kind without payment, as Lee had given strict orders that violators would be disciplined.

Some Rebels, without either money or script, but with empty stomachs and quick minds, still managed to eat without confiscation, as this recipe for 'stone soup' shows:

The soldier is an inventive genius, he can prepare and dress anything, even to making "stone soup," which by the way happened thus:

A hungry looking, lank, angular specimen of the genus Reb, appeared at the farm house of a widow lady . . . who was noted for her niggardliness and parsimony. So close indeed, and mean was she, that a placard was nailed on her gate with the inscription: "No soldiers fed or housed here."

The best foragers and pirooters of the brigade met their match in this old woman, and returned defeated from the field, and at last she was left in undisturbed possession of her place and no hungry soldiers ever were fed at her table.

When [one Reb, an] animated picture and figure of famine stalked in her yard, the old lady was prepared for hostilities and immediately.

The sad faced defender of the soil, asked in a humble way:

"Please marm, lend me your iron pot?"

"Man, I haven't no iron pot for you!"

"Please marm, I won't hurt it."

"You don't s'pose I am agwine to lend you my pot to carry it into camp, do you? I would never see it again. . ."

"Marm I will bring your pot back, hope I may die if I don't. I won't take it out of the yard and will kindle the fire here."

"What do want with it?"

"I want to bile some stone soup," answered the soldier, looking plaintively at the questioner.

"Stone soup! What's stone soup? and the old lady's curiosity began to rise. "How do you make it, and what for?"

"Marm," replied the sad faced infantryman, "ever since the war began, the rations have become scarcer and scarcer, until they have stopped entirely, and we uns have to live on stone soup to keep from starving."

"Stone soup, how do you make it?"

"Please marm you get a pot with some water, and I will show you. We biles the stone."

The ancient dame trotted off, full of wonder and inquisitiveness to get the article, and by the time she returned the soldier had kindled a fire, and settling the kettle on the pile, waited for the water to boil, taking a rock about the size of his head, he washed it clean and put it in the pot, and then he said to the old woman who was peering in the pot.

"Marm, please get me a small piece of bacon, about the size of your hand, to gin the soup a relish."

The old lady again toddle off and got it for him. Another five minutes passed by.

"Is it done?" inquired the woman.

"Mos' done; but please marm give me a half a dozen potatoes, just to gin it a final flavor."

"All right," answered the widow, who by this time had become deeply absorbed in the operation.

The potatoes [were] followed by cabbage and meat. Another ten minutes was numbered in the cycle of eternity.

"It isn't done yet, 'pears to me that it's a long time a cooking," remarked the antique mother, who was getting impatient.

"Mos' done; jest get me a handful of flour, some pepper and salt, one or two termartusses, and it will be all right."

These things were brought, and after bubbling in the pot awhile, the utensil was lifted off the fire, the soldier pulled his knife, with spoon attachment, and commenced to eat. The economical widow went in, got a plate, came out, and filled it, the first spoonful she tasted she exclaimed,

"Why, man, this is nothing but common vegetable soup."

"So it is, marm," responded the soldier, who was making the best time he could, "but we uns calls it stone soup."

The old lady carried her pot in the house, learning that the ingenuity of a soldier can compass anything. [49:11-13]

Let us hope Joseph Calhoun Burns, if nothing more, at least got to dine on "stone soup" when he was in the town of Sharpsburg on September 15.

Not all Rebels were as inventive, and not all were respectful of Lee's order against stealing food, as a private in Lee's army remembered the time

. . . a cow -- a foolish, innocent, confiding animal -- not knowing soldiers' ways, came grazing up to our lines; a dozen bullets crashed through her skull, and a score of knives were soon at work, in an incredibly short space of time, quicker indeed that you could skin a rabbit, the hide of the female bovine was pared and cut off, and a ravenous pack of wolves could not sooner have laid bare her bones than did these hungry soldiers. Everything was eaten, even her tail, that twas but an hour ago calmly and easily switching the flies from her back. [49:11]

As a general rule, however, and with the exception of food such as corn and apples or stray chickens and rabbits, Lee's order was obeyed. As

a Southern journalist reported some time after the war,

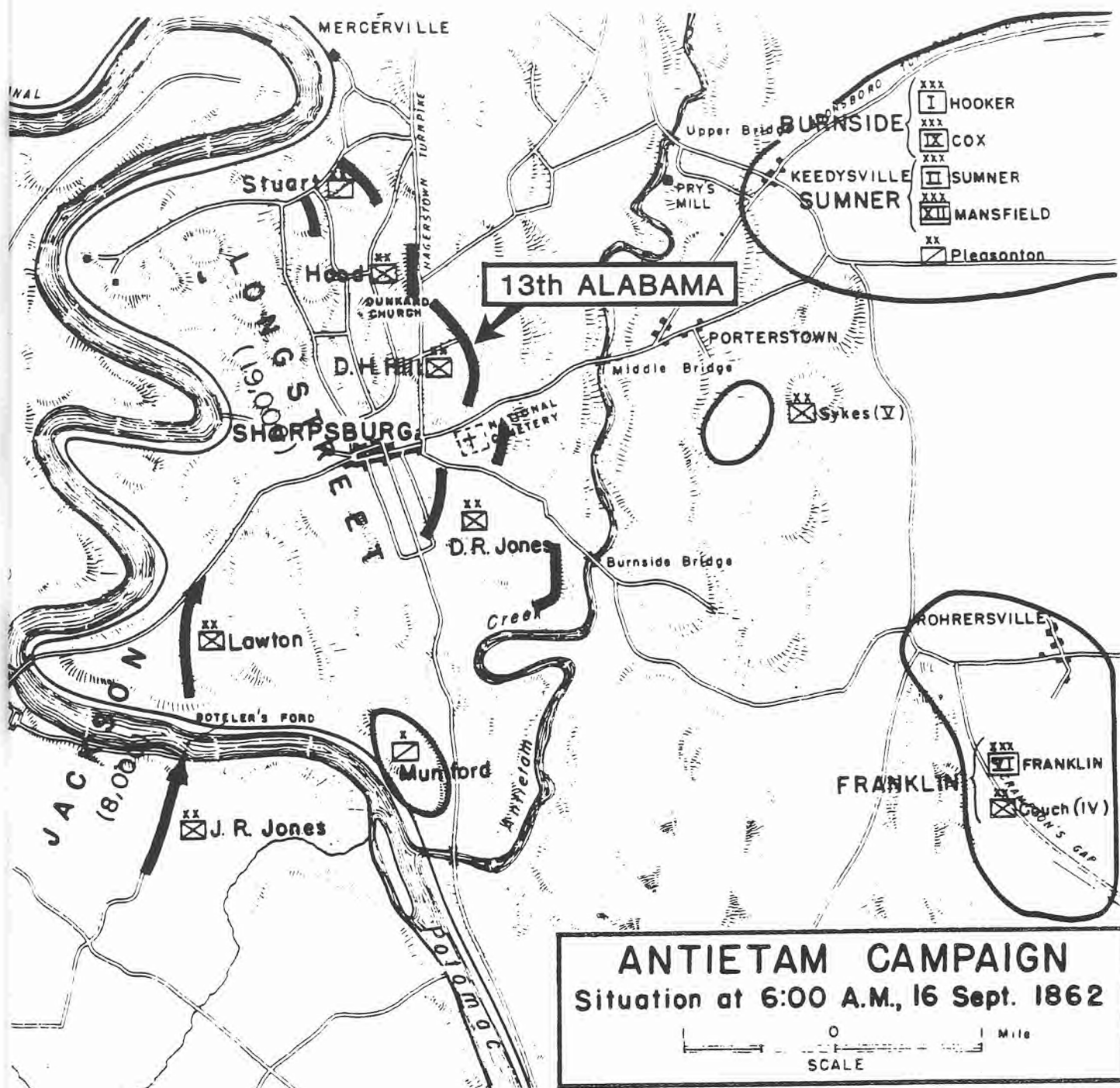
Governor Curtin [of Maryland] and General Wool both testify that these men -- ragged, shoeless, half-fed -- passed through the country without making depredations or taking anything without offering to pay for what they took, even if it were in Confederate script. General Lee's order had been issued to that effect, and though hungry, the men observed his request. It is for the future historian to compare such an order and the character of the man who issued it and the men who observed it, with the vandalism of Butler, Sherman, and Sheridan and their men. [62:211]

Fed or not on anything more than corn and coffee, Joseph Calhoun Burns and the 13th Alabama, with the rest of Colquitt's and Rodes' brigades took positions that morning between the town of Sharpsburg and Antietam Creek {See Map 4, "Movements and Positions of 13th Alabama, September 15-17," and Map 5, "Situation at 6:00 A.M., September 16," next two pages}.

Colquitt's men were positioned southeast of Sharpsburg while Rodes' were placed at the end of the Sunken Lane which ran east from the Hagerstown Pike into the fields owned by the Myers {Meyers?} families [95]. Garland's brigade was just to the left of Rodes'; Anderson's straddled the Pike at its junction with the Sunken Road, with Ripley's just behind it. There Colquitt's brigade stayed the night, unprotected from the elements; none of them were lucky enough to be bivouacked in the houses or barns in and around Sharpsburg. There in the open fields the ". . . troops were wearied out with their long march and were soon unconscious in profound slumber, notwithstanding the cannon-firing" [38:34] in the distance as McClellan's army closed in on Sharpsburg.

Early the next morning, on September 16th, while a heavy mist obscured Lee's men from the scrutiny of the Union troops now on the other side of the Antietam [65:206], the 13th Alabama and the Georgia regiments composing Colquitt's brigade were repositioned to the left of Garland, on the farm and near the home of William Roulette. A little later Ripley was moved from behind Anderson and placed a little south of Colquitt on the farm of Samuel Mumma.

At that moment on the 16th McClellan's Union troops outnumbered Lee's Confederates by more than two-to-one [65:205], and Lee was worried more of McClellan's troops might cross the Antietam before all the divisions commanded by Jackson, whom Lee called "my strong right arm," could



reach Sharpsburg from Harper's Ferry. Shortly after noon Jackson arrived and

. . . as the various Confederate units met on the field, a dramatic and touching reunion was held. Harper's Ferry veterans embraced South Mountain veterans as nearly every regimental band struck up "Dixie." Thousands of voices joined in the "inspiring, soul-stirring music. It seemed to put new life into both men and animals and . . . we felt ready for anything our beloved general might undertake." [73:44, 45 and 65:208]

By dusk of the 15th Lee's troops were in position west of the Antietam and east of Sharpsburg, as were McClellan's, just a few hundred yards away to the north and east.

As Lee reported,

The commands of Longstreet and D. H. Hill [which included the 13th Alabama]. . . were placed in position along the range of hills between the town and the Antietam, nearly parallel to the course of that stream, Longstreet on the right of the road to Boonsboro and Hill on the left . . . [Brigadier General John Bell] Hood's two brigades were . . . posted between D. H. Hill and the Hagerstown road. General Jackson was . . . position[ed] on Hood's left . . . toward the Potomac [where it was] protected by General [James Ewell Brown "Jeb"] Stuart with his cavalry . . . [Brigadier General John G.] Walker . . . was stationed on Longstreet's right. [93:148]

McClellan confirms Lee's position on the eve of the battle ran from ". . . their left resting on the Potomac . . . extend[ing] south, the right resting upon the hills to the south of Sharpsburg, near Snavelly's farm. [93:54]

The left end of Lee's general line of battle was anchored on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal just east of the Potomac and about two miles northwest of Sharpsburg. It ran southeasterly, crossing the Hagerstown Pike through the North Woods over the Miller farm, to the East Woods. Turning almost due south it ran parallel to and east of the Hagerstown Pike, in front of Sharpsburg, and ended on the right at Snavelly's farm on a bend in the Antietam Creek. [89]

Lee's left flank was in the West Woods, north of town, running south to the farm lands of Mumma and Roulette (where the 13th Alabama was); his center was opposite and in front of Sharpsburg; while his right flank ran south to the Lower Bridge. Jackson's divisions were north of the Boonsboro Pike, and Major General James Longstreet's were to the south of that road.

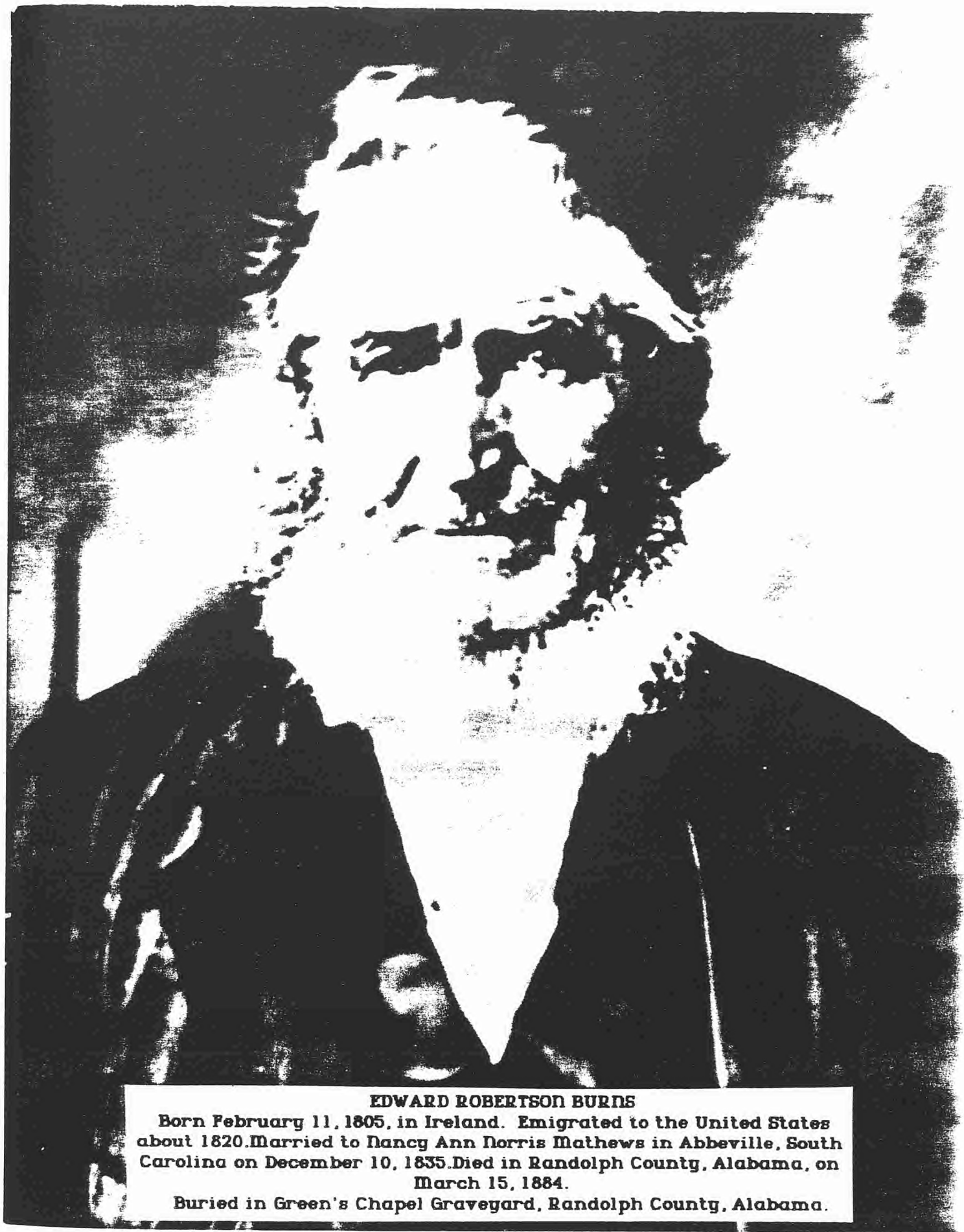
Lee's line ran five miles long, roughly north to south, with Hill on the left but near the center, his 3,000 men stretched over a mile of the front, running from the Roulette farm south to the Boonsboro Pike. [93:1022; 94:65-69] {See Map 3, "The Antietam Battlefield," following page 5.} The 13th Alabama was bivouacked on the Roulette farm, just to the left of the farmhouse.

It had been a long, hard day and longer, harder work for Joseph Calhoun Burns, but at least for him that day passed without fighting more than the elements. The disappearance of the sun beyond the Potomac brought on the chill of night and he snuggled a little closer to one of the fire-trenches of Company D, pushing between his friends. He lay with his bare feet to the fire, his oil cloth beneath and his blanket over him, his knap-sack for a pillow. The typical company "... fire was made some fifteen feet long [for in that] way three or four fires could accomodate [a] whole company, both officers and men. [22:17]

He lay cold and damp, tired and hungry, next to the Company D fire and beneath the wet clouds and starless skies. No one then or now, only God, could know what his thoughts and feelings were that sorry Wednesday night. Yet no doubt he thought, as he did every night, of his family.

He could picture in his mind the fragile beauty of his young Georgia-born wife, Mary Ann Elizabeth West Burns. He missed her, terribly so, and he knew from her last letter that she missed him, too; but he didn't really worry about her welfare -- he knew his father would see to her needs. And he knew that his slave, Charlie Burns (whose surname, as with almost all slaves, was taken from his owner), had promised to take care of "Miss Mary" when "Mr. Joe" went off to help beat the Yankees.

{He could not have known, of course, that even after the war when Charlie became a free man he continued to care for "Miss Mary." He could not have known that one of his sons, William Ephriam Burns, would name one of his own sons "Charlie," in honor of the black man who also cared for him and his brother long after the war. He could not have known that as the freed Charlie aged and approached death his daughter promised to, and did, keep his oath to care for "Miss Mary." He could not have known that one of his great-grandsons, and



EDWARD ROBERTSON BURNS

Born February 11, 1805, in Ireland. Emigrated to the United States about 1820. Married to Nancy Ann Norris Mathews in Abbeville, South Carolina on December 10, 1835. Died in Randolph County, Alabama, on March 15, 1884.

Buried in Green's Chapel Graveyard, Randolph County, Alabama.

one of his great-great grandsons would also be named "Charlie," perpetuating the name and honoring the debt he incurred to his slave "Charlie Burns." He could not have known that his youngest brother, Edward Samuel Burns, would after the turn of the century give title to some Burns land to the slave's descendents, and that some of them would "go North to seek and find success." He could not have known that "Miss Mary" would live to be over 100 years old, and tell this story many, many times.]

He thought of his parents, Edward Robertson Burns and Nancy Ann Norris Mathews Burns, who were probably already

Edward Robertson Burns and Nancy Ann Norris Mathews Burns {See Photograph 4, "Edward Robertson Burns," taken about 1875-1880, next page.}

The parents of Joseph Calhoun Burns, E. R. was born February 11, 1805, in Ireland, while Nancy was born May 29, 1810, in Abbeville County, South Carolina. E. R. emigrated to America about 1820, met Nancy in Abbeville, and married her there on December 10, 1835. They had five children: Joseph Calhoun Burns, Mary Jane Burns, James Thomas Burns, Edward Samuel Burns, and Margaret Ann Burns. They moved from Abbeville to Georgia about 1843, then to Randolph County, Alabama, about 1846. Nothing is known (to this writer) of E. R.'s parents, nor of his county of birth in Ireland, though surely it was in what is now known as Northern Ireland. Nancy was the great grand-daughter of William Calhoun (1718 or 1723 - 1792?), whose nephew, John C. Calhoun, was Senator from South Carolina and Vice President of the United States. No doubt Joseph Calhoun Burns got his middle name from that family association. E. R. died March 15, 1884, and Nancy followed him eight days later. They are buried together in the Green's Chapel graveyard, near Weedowee, Randolph County, Alabama.

working on the crop. He not only loved but admired his Ulster-born father, who had emigrated from near poverty in Ireland to South Carolina where he met, wooed, and won Nancy Ann -- herself a descendent of the Calhoun family and a niece of Vice President John Caldwell Calhoun -- before they moved to Alabama via Georgia in search of better land to farm. They, like he, were both Scotch-Irish, with distant and therefore dim roots in the lowlands of pre-Elizabethan Scotland.

And certainly he thought of the family friends and relatives -- the Andersons, the Benefields, the Gays, the Mathews, the McClendons, the Messers, the Parkers, the Robertsons, the Shelnutts, the Washingtons, the

West, the Willinghams, the Wilsons, and -- oh, so many other good people back in Randolph County.

Perhaps he wondered if his maternal relative, William Robertson, who had gone North to join the Yankee army, was within a couple of hundred yards of him -- he knew the Yankee

Yankees from Alabama

At least two of Joseph Calhoun Burns' kinfolk joined the Union army. They were Ephriam West, his brother-in-law from Heard County, Georgia, and William C. Robertson, Jr., a cousin. Ephriam West was Captain of Company L, 1st Alabama Cavalry, U. S. Army; after the war he moved from Alabama to Kansas. William Robertson may also have joined the 1st Alabama Cavalry, U. S. Army; but if not he served in another Yankee unit. His oldest brother, Joseph Robertson, joined the Rebel army and was killed in the Battle of Mobile.

During the war 2,678 Alabamans joined the Union Army; 712 of whom -- like Ephriam West -- served in the 1st Alabama Cavalry. Fifteen of the 712 were from Randolph County. The other 1,966 mostly joined with Tennessee units of the Union army. All told, the Union army had 85 units composed of Southern white men. In addition, some 10,000 black Alabamans are said to have served in the Union army, mostly in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Colored Infantry Regiments.

and Rebel pickets were so close they could hear each other walk even if they couldn't see each other due to the darkness [93:218] -- also thinking of kinfolk and friends back home in Alabama and Georgia. Perhaps he wondered if he would have to fight, even kill, that kin of his.

About 9:00 P.M. it began to drizzle so he tightened his blanket around his neck and tilted his slouch hat to cover his face better. A little drizzle didn't much bother him or the 13th Alabama because

. . . by continuous hardening soldiers learn to sleep in a drowning storm, in a mud puddle, as sweetly as a citizen comfortably tucked away in his bed of down. They sleep in a rain that, were they not enured and seasoned, would make every man ill from the exposure. [48:506]

Joseph Calhoun Burns drifted off to sleep, the cold, the rain, the sporadic musketry, and the occasional roar of artillery and the song of

cannon-balls overhead merged in cacophonous orchestration for his dreams. {See I, Appendix.}

As he dozed by the fire did he think of -- or fear -- the possibility of his own death on the morrow? Probably he thought about it but surely he did not anticipate it nor fear it.

Most of us who have been in war in our youth -- World War II, or Korea, or Vietnam -- thought of the possibility of death but, with the sense of immortality that only the young seem to have, no one us believed he would be killed in battle. And who is to say we were much different than Joseph Calhoun Burns, or he from us, in such a situation?

He, like other Johnny Rebs and Billy Yanks,

. . . consoled himself by the time-worn maxim that comparatively few die in battle, and the conviction that he would be among the lucky majority who were destined to survive. "If killed in battle" (one Johnny Reb wrote home) "what more glorious death would you wish me to die?. . . But I do not expect to be killed," he said. "All men that go into fights are not killed. Why should I not be the one to escape?" [98:35]

Sharpsburg was not to be Joseph Calhoun Burns' first battle; he was an experienced, toughened veteran who, with his comrades in the 13th Alabama, had given the Yankees by far more than they had taken. Shot and shell carried no great fear for him as he had experienced them many times between the Battle of Yorktown and the coming battle at Sharpsburg.

Doubtless he was afraid; courageous men are. But equally doubtless, he would fight well: he carried within him the belligerence and stoicism of the Scotch-Irish, the bravery and the righteousness of the Confederacy, and the stubbornness bred into the bones of a Burns.

No, he did not fear death. Had he, he might well have become a straggler and dropped out of the line into the beautiful, lush fields of Maryland. There were thousands of stragglers in both armies, and Lee estimated he lost 10,000 men to straggling in the two weeks after he crossed the Potomac into Maryland -- the overwhelming majority due to sickness, hunger, and feet so bare and bloody as to make it impossible to march, much less fight, but also some due to fear and cowardice.

Joseph Calhoun Burns' own General, D. H. Hill, said of stragglers that

Doubtless the want of shoes, the want of food, and physical exhaustion had kept many brave men from being with the army; but thousands of thieving poltroons had kept away from sheer cowardice. The straggler is generally a thief and always a coward, lost to all sense of shame; he can only be kept in ranks by a strict and sanguinary discipline. [93:1026]

But Joseph Calhoun Burns was neither coward nor straggler. He was there. He was ready. He was able. And he was willing -- perhaps even eager -- to fight on the morrow. Yet, if he did not fear death surely he thought of it. He must have thought of his younger brother, James Thomas Burns, who had enlisted with him in the 13th Alabama on July 19, 1861, and who had fought side-by-side with him until a few weeks earlier when James had been wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines (also known as Fair Oaks) on May 30 or June 1 and died of those wounds of June 13, 1862. [See Company Muster Roll (for Company D, 13th Regiment Alabama Infantry), July 19, 1862, in National Archives.]

James Thomas Burns, Private,
Company D, Thirteenth Alabama Regiment

Born September 16, 1841, in Abbeville, South Carolina, he was the second of three sons born to E. R. and Nancy Burns. He had a fair complexion, light hair, gray eyes, and was 5'10" in height. On July 12, 1861, he traveled with his older brother, Joseph Calhoun Burns, to Montgomery where they both enlisted in the 13th Alabama Infantry Regiment on July 19. He fought at the battles of Yorktown and Williamsburg before he was mortally wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines on May 30 or June 1, 1862. Taken to Seabrooks Hospital in Richmond, Virginia, he died on June 13, 1862, at the age of 20. He was unmarried.

In his mind's eye he could still see James clutching his torn body, as if his hands could stem the flow of blood and heal the gaping hole a Yankee bullet had made in his chest. In his mind's ear he could still hear James saying, just after he had fallen, "Joe, help me! Help me! I'm hurt bad!" His memory brought back to mind the sad, sad day of James' death in Receiving and Wayside (Seabrooks) Hospital [See Register, General Hospital No. 9, Richmond, Virginia, June 13, 1862 (Confederate Archives, Chapter 6, File No. 115, page 225), in National Archives.] when he held James' hand and heard him say in his delirium, "Joe -- Joe, tell Daddy and Ma -- tell them I want to go home to Wedowee now," as if James didn't know he was about to die. And Joseph shivered, not from the chill of the night but from the

chill of the memory of giving Captain Reaves the personal belongings of James, and the Captain's promise to see they'd be sent home to James' and his parents in Alabama. But he was grateful, very grateful, to the two kind ladies, Miss Roper and Miss Murray, who promised Joseph that James would be buried properly in a Christian ceremony and grave.

He remembered how painful it was to write home and tell his folks that his brother, James, had been killed. There is no record of such a letter, so we cannot know what he wrote. But perhaps it was not unlike the one that another Confederate wrote home after his brother was killed at Sharpsburg:

My dear afflicted Sister,

It gives me intensest pain to tell you of the death of my dear brother . . . Andrew. Oh: how desolate is my sad heart at the loss of that brother twice indeared by the hardships and perils we have passed through together. But if my heart is so sad, what must yours be my sister . . . I cannot comfort you, but can only commend you to the tender mercies of our Heavenly Father who hath said he does not willingly afflict. . . . Our dear one suffered no pain in death for he was shot through the temples. He was killed yesterday morning in the fight at Sharpsburg. On the conflict being undesided, his body has not yet been recovered, but Maj. George has promised to attend to his interment. I am too badly wounded to return to look after him, having been shot through the left arm and twice, slightly in the side. I cannot write more now, but will do so in a few days. My heart is too sad. To God I commend you, my dear sister, Your sorrowing brother . . . [98:213]

No, Joseph Calhoun Burns did not expect to die on the morrow, or in the war. Others, yes, even James had died; and maybe some day even his youngest brother, Edward Samuel Burns, just turned 18 years old and still in Wedowee working the farm with the boys' parents, if the war lasted that long.

He was worried about young Ed; he knew Ed wanted to follow his lead and James' and join the Confederate Army even though Ed was needed at home. He ought to write to Ed, he thought, and tell him to stay home -- or, if Ed simply insisted on joining up, to advise him once again to enlist in the cavalry and not the infantry.

If Joseph Calhoun Burns ever wrote such a letter -- and it was good advice -- there is no record of it, but it might well have been just like one another Reb wrote to his home :

Tell [my brother] . . . to Join the cavalry. . . .
never join as a private [in the infantry] . . . but by all
means to Join the Cavalry -- and bear in mind that a
private in The Infantry is the worst place he can
possibly be put into in this war -- so . . . Join the
Cavalry. [98:341]

If Ed had to join up maybe he'd be safe in the cavalry. But

Edward Samuel Burns, Private, Company H,
Seventh Regiment, Alabama Cavalry {See Photograph
5, "Edward Samuel Burns," taken about 1910-1914.}

Born August 5, 1844, in West Point, Georgia,
he was the youngest son of E. R. and Nancy Burns. He
had a fair complexion, reddish-blond hair, blue eyes,
and stood 5'10" tall. On June 30, 1864, he enlisted in
the 7th Alabama Cavalry and fought at the Battle of
Nashville, Tennessee, in December of that year.
Captured by the Union army on December 15, 1864, he
was sent to Camp Douglas Military Prison in
Louisville, Kentucky. He remained a military
prisoner until May 15, 1865, a few weeks after the end
of the war, when he took the Oath of Allegiance to the
United States of America and was given a parole. He
returned to Randolph County, Alabama, where he
married Sophia Sirethia Gay. They had eleven
children, the last of whom -- Mrs. Odessa Estelle
("Essie") Burns Marion -- died at her home in
Wedowee in 1985. Edward Samuel Burns lived a long
and distinguished life and, in 1922, when he was 79,
he was awarded a pension for his service in the
Confederate States Army. He died September 11, 1931,
aged 88. His wife died March 1, 1934, aged 91.

if Joseph Calhoun Burns mourned the death of his brother, James, and
feared for the life of his brother, Edward, he had no fears for himself.
Others might, and would die in the war; but not him, he believed, not
Joseph Calhoun Burns, never.

He could not have know that the gods of war had inscribed "JOSEPH
CALHOUN BURNS, Private in Company D, 13th Alabama Volunteer
Infantry Regiment" as one of the names on the roll of those to be taken
on September 17, 1862.



EDWARD SAMUEL BURNS

Born August 5, 1844, in West Point, Georgia. Married to Sophia Sirethia Gay on November 14, 1867, in Randolph County, Alabama. Died September 11, 1931, in Randolph County, Alabama.

The Day of the Battle: An Overview

The Battle of Sharpsburg lasted twelve hours and had three discernible phases: in the north, around Miller's farm and cornfield, from about 5:45 A.M. to 9:30 A.M.; in the center, around the Sunken Road, from about 9:30 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.; and in the south, around the Lower Bridge, from about 1:00 P.M. to 5:45 P.M. {See Maps 6 and 7, "The Battlefield Enlarged," next two pages.}

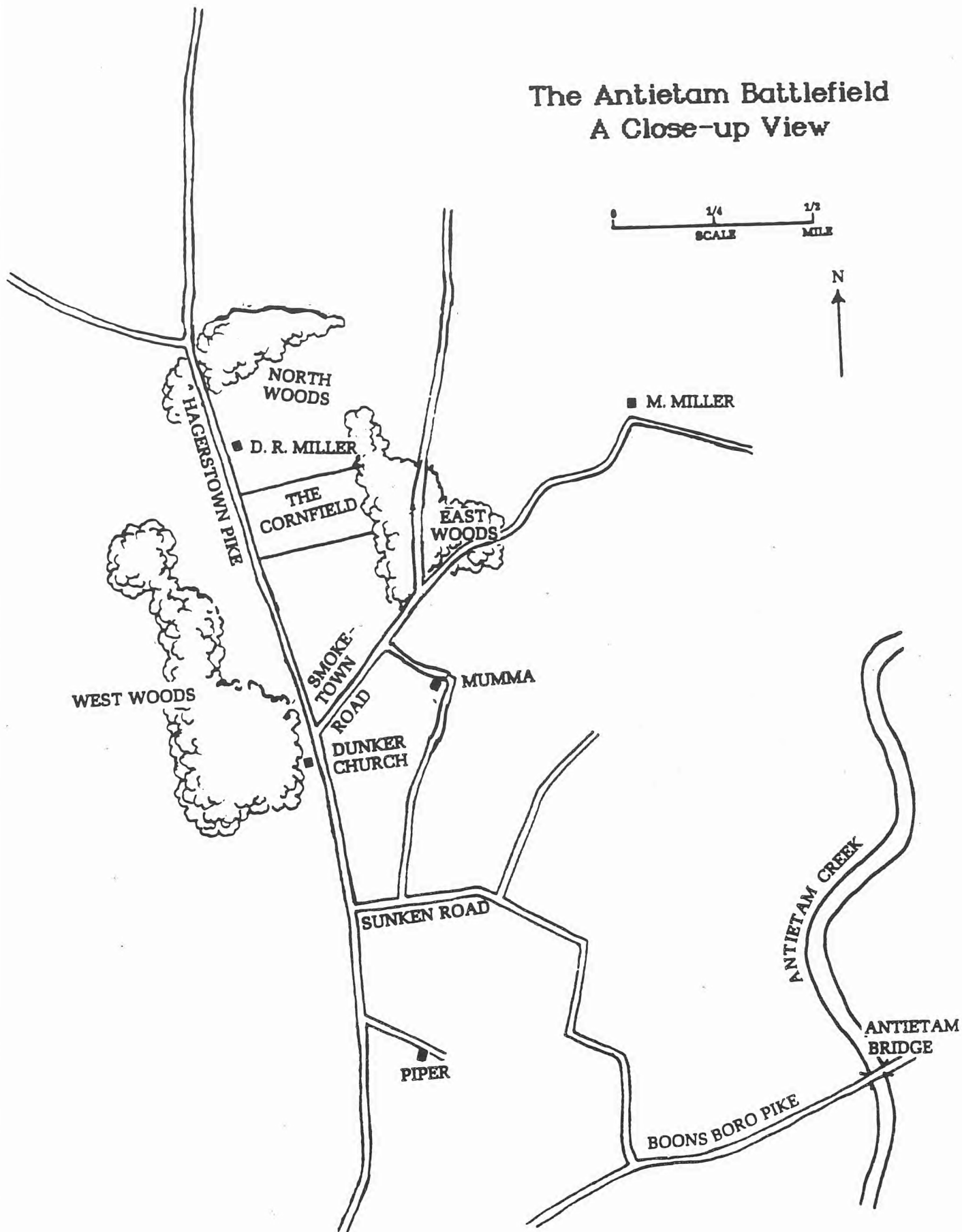
Perhaps the best brief overview of the battle can be offered by excerpts from *The West Point Atlas of the Civil War*:

As soon as there was enough light on the morning of the 17th, Hooker delivered a powerful assault on Lee's left. Here, Jackson's line gave way in heavy fighting but did not break. A savage counterattack by Hood and [three of Colquitt's brigades, including the 13th Alabama] helped to check the Union attack; however, Confederate losses were heavy. Mansfield brought the XII Corps forward, but was killed almost instantly. Shortly thereafter, Hooker was wounded.

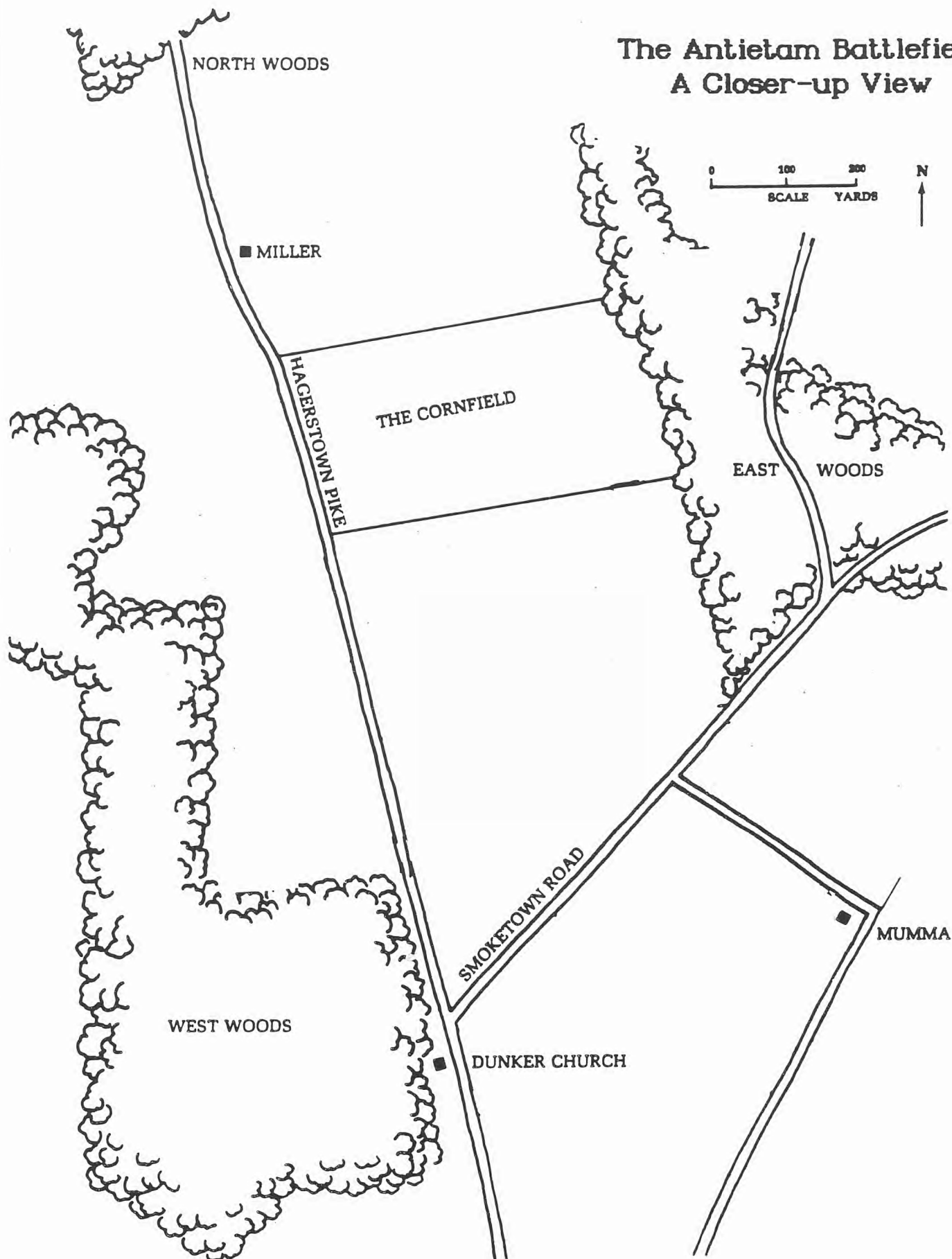
The loss of two fighting corps commanders, Hooker and Mansfield, left no one in over-all control of McClellan's "main attack" on the Confederate left. Meade rallied the remnants of the I Corps near North Woods, while the XII Corps' division commanders, Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams and Brig. Gen. George S. Greene, pressed the attack. They completed the shattering of the Confederate left and forced it back beyond the Dunkard Church and West Woods. Soon Williams had to withdraw his division to rest and replenish ammunition, but Greene clung to the Dunkard Church and part of the woods around it. . . .

Though eager to advance to the sound of the guns, [Sumner] was held at McClellan's headquarters until 7:20 A.M. Finally . . . he moved out with his II Corps, he himself riding with the leading division, that of Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick. Sumner, a reckless old cavalryman, brought Sedgwick's division forward in mass without pausing for reconnaissance. Flung into

The Antietam Battlefield A Close-up View



The Antietam Battlefield A Closer-up View



action, it was soon trapped by superior numbers of Confederate troops converging from three directions and was immediately driven off in disorder with the loss of 2,200 men. The Confederates pressed the pursuit and almost regained the ground lost earlier in the morning, but they were finally stopped by strong Union artillery fire. When Sedgwick's division left the field, Greene, now exposed on his right, was also forced to withdraw. *[Thus ending the first phase of the battle, a stalemate in the north.]*

The second division of Sumner's corps, that of Brig. Gen. William H. French, had somehow missed the road taken by Sedgwick. It came into line farther south against the left of Lee's center, where it became engaged in a savage fight with D. H. Hill [whose troops included the 13th Alabama]. Sumner's last division, that of Maj. Gen. Israel B. Richardson, arrived later on French's left, after having been delayed for an hour by McClellan. Together, the two divisions forced the Confederates back into Bloody Lane (a sunken road which formed a natural trench). Here the battle reached the extreme of viciousness and frightful carnage. Finally, the Union forces gained enfilade fire on the lane. One Confederate commander, seeking to get his troops out of the line of fire, ordered them to face about and march to the rear. This suggestion of retreat affected the other troops in the lane. They broke and fled, leaving the lane to Union forces.

The last Confederate regiment north of Sharpsburg had been committed. Lee's artillery, though still fighting back gamely, had been overwhelmed by the mass of expertly handled Federal guns. Sharpsburg was filled with demoralized soldiers; famous commands, like Hood's Texans, were completely shattered; most of the left and center was held only by devoted handfuls, hanging on out of sheer courage. One more vigorous Federal attack and the Army of Northern Virginia would face destruction. . . .

Following the capture of Bloody Lane, Richardson drove the Confederates from the hills to the south of it, completely wrecking Lee's center. Richardson was

seriously wounded while regrouping for a final assault, but Franklin was now on the field and was eager to make the decisive attack. Sumner, however, thoroughly shaken by his recent repulse, asserted his rank as senior corps commander present and forbade another advance. Franklin appealed to McClellan, whereupon McClellan upheld Sumner. *{Thus ended the second phase of the battle, a stalemate in the center.}*

There still remained Burnside's effort on the south. He had forgotten to have the creek scouted for possible crossings; consequently, his main effort was made against the bridge now known by his name [i.e., Burnside Bridge, the Lower Bridge across Antietam Creek]. However, he did send Brig. Gen. Isaac P. Rodman to cross at a ford (Snively's) reported to exist some distance downstream. Two attacks on the bridge were repulsed, but a third rush at about 1:00 P.M. carried it. About that same time, Rodman finally located his ford while, ironically, other elements of Burnside's command discovered that the creek could be waded at many places along their front. Still, it was 3:00 P.M. before the IX Corps was deployed across the creek. Initially, the IX Corps' renewed attack was highly successful. By 4:00 P.M., it had gained almost all of the high ground to the east and south of Sharpsburg, though Lee moved every available man and gun to resist it.

Meanwhile, in the center, Pleasanton's cavalry and Sykes' infantry had pushed across the Middle Bridge and detected the weakness of the Confederate line before Sharpsburg. They urged an attack, but again McClellan declined to exploit the opportunity. Then, as Burnside's men drove to the edge of Sharpsburg, A. P. Hill's [Confederate] command came panting uphill from Boteler's Ford after a strenuous forced march and crashed into the Union flank. Burnside had not foreseen such an attack, and McClellan had not spared any cavalry to cover the Union left. To add to the confusion, many of Hill's own men wore blue uniforms captured at Harper's Ferry. Their charges drove the IX Corps back to the ridges along the creek, where it held. There the battle ended.

. . . [without victory or defeat by either side.]
[94:67-69]

On that overview a more detailed description of the battle, in which Joseph Calhoun Burns gave his life for the South, becomes more understandable.

The First Phase: 5:43 A.M. to 10:00 A.M., The Battles for Miller's Cornfield

In the darkness of the hour before dawn, Hooker and Jackson were ready to begin the struggle that was to become the single bloodiest day of battle in American history {See J, Appendix}.

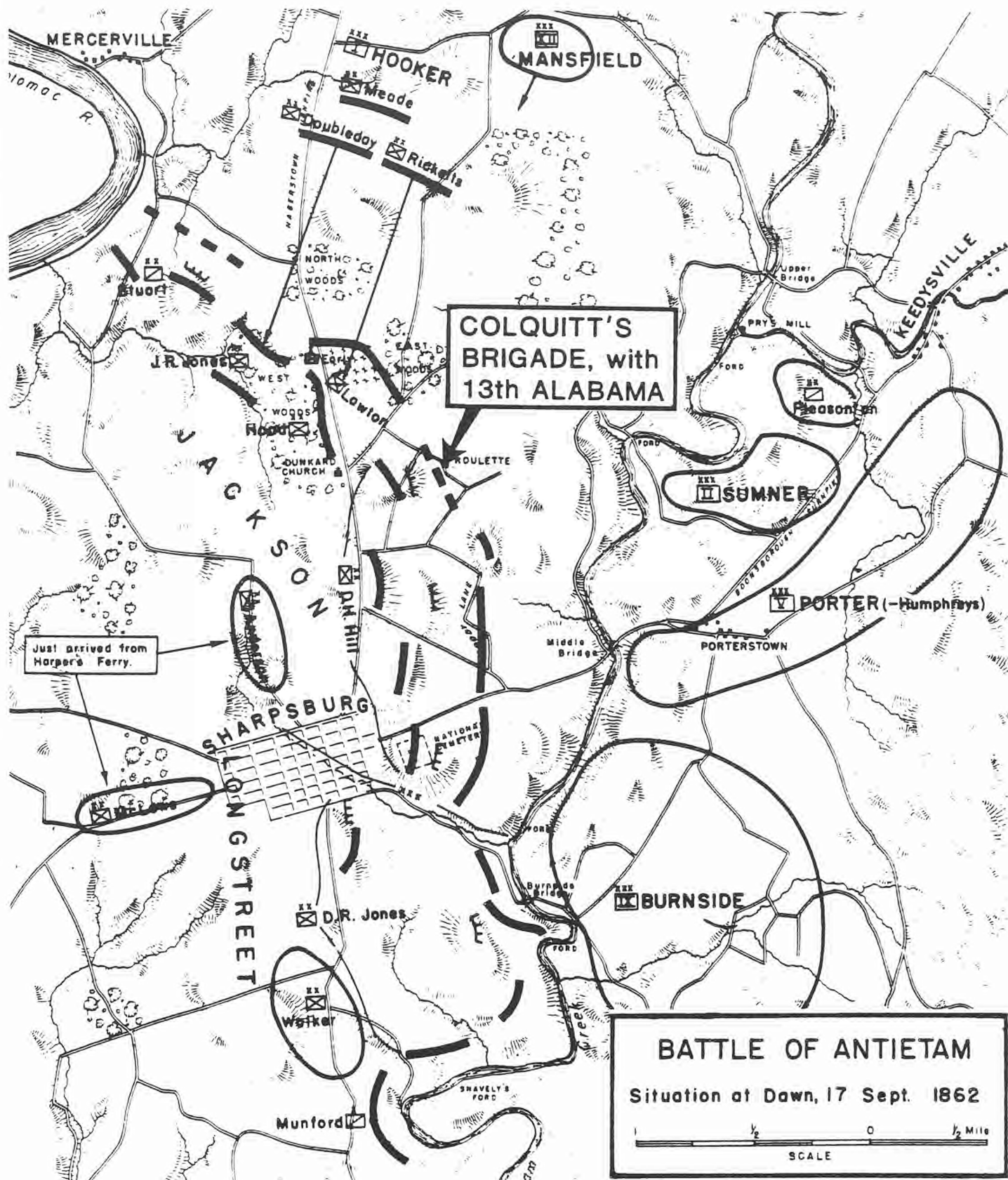
Hooker's I Corps was

. . . at the northern apex of a triangle -- the North Wood, a large patch of trees that served as his launching point. To his left, at the eastern base, was the East Wood, and to the right was the West Wood and the little white [Dunkard] Church of the Brethren. In between lay the D. R. Miller farm and its cornfield of some 30 acres. The high ground at the church would be his objective . . . [65:212]

and he had some 8,000 men, in the ten brigades of Doubleday's and Ricketts' divisions, at the ready.

Just as Hooker was ready, Jackson was waiting, for "Stonewall" [lay in wait] with artillery massed around the little Dunkard Church and solid ranks of infantry in [Miller's] cornfield and west of the [Hagerstown] turnpike" [19:430] where Lawton's and Jones' division, containing some 5,800 men in seven brigades, were positioned. The cornstalks were, if not as high as an elephant's eye, over six feet tall and high enough for Lawton to believe his Georgians and Alabamans were concealed from the Federals. {See Map 8, "Situation at Dawn, September 17," next page.}

No sooner the sun rose at 5:43 A.M. than Hooker began to move, even though everything was blanketed by a wet, foggy mist left by the night's drizzle, and the little Dunkard Church could not be seen even though it was but a half-mile away from his own lines.



Lee, in his official report, stated that "At early dawn . . . the enemy's artillery opened vigorously from both sides of the Antietam, the heaviest fire being directed against our left. Under cover of this fire a large force of infantry attacked General Jackson." [93:149]

Hooker's I Corps

. . . struck with tremendous force [as his] ten brigades moved out from the cover of the North Woods. . . . Doubleday's men advanced along the Hagerstown Pike [while] Ricketts' force charged down the Smoketown road toward the Dunkard Church. . . . [as] the wave of Federals charged southward, spreading over the front from the East Woods to the fringe of the West Woods. [88:21].

A veteran of the 27th Virginia remembered that the Yankee attack

. . . came at once and raged furiously both on the right and left of the Hagerstown turnpike. Being on the left of that turnpike I can speak personally only of what occurred on that side. Our two little brigades in the front line, about 400 men, resisted [Doubleday] as long as it was possible -- I cannot remember just how long . . . [38:34]

Doubleday's men thus passed quickly through the Rebel pickets and first lines of skirmishers until they reached the cornfield where Lawton's troops were hidden. The Rebs saw them coming toward the cornfield in

. . . double battle lines, the Federals were moving toward us at charge bayonets, common time, and the sunbeams falling on their well polished guns and bayonets gave a glamor and a show at once fearful and entrancing [65:213],

and when they reached the cornfield ". . . the entire Miller farm came alive with the Rebel yell. The tall corn shimmered as a vast sea of Confederate infantry, Lawton's Division, open up on the Federals . . . [65:213]

The Famous "Rebel Yell"

None alive today can with
assurance imitate the famous "Rebel yell,"

which was heard for the first time at First Manassas (First Bull Run). Bell I. Wiley wrote in 1943 that *"An attempt to reproduce [the Rebel yell] a few years ago when Confederate veterans re-enacted battle scenes . . . [but] old voices were too weak and incentive too feeble to create again the true battle cry."*

Words can help but little, but the Rebel yell has been described as: an unpremeditated, unrestrained and utterly informal "hollering"; a mixture of fright, nervousness, exultation, hatred, and pinch of pure deviltry; a wild, piercing yell; a continual series of sharp, shrill yells; a succession of yelps, staccato and shrill; and shrill, exultant, savage.

Obviously the Rebel yell had variations. The Virginians' was different from the Alabamans, and both from the Mississippians; and surely all were different from that of the Indian brigades that served in the Rebel army -- theirs was a succession of shrill war whoops. {See Bell, Wiley I. in the *Bibliography for the best comments on the Rebel yell.*}

A Federal officer recalled that

As we appeared at the edge of the corn a long line of men in butternut and gray rose up from the ground. Simultaneously, the hostile battle lines opened with a tremendous fire upon each other. Men, I cannot say, fell; they were knocked out of the ranks by the dozens. [88:22]

The Rebels, though battered, gave at least as good as they got. For up to one-half hour, perhaps, Lawton's outnumbered division held off the Yankees, stopped them from penetrating the cornfield, and began to drive them back.

Hooker, seeing the Rebels punish his men from their hidden sanctuary in the tall corn, ordered the cornfield to be razed by his cannons:

"[My] instructions were immediately given for the assemblage of all my spare batteries . . . to open up with cannister at once." [93:213]

The cannondade was devastating and both Rebels and corn were cut to the ground. The aim of the Union artillery was so precise their ". . . fire was deadly accurate and the carnage was terrible. Bits of

bodies, rifles, and fence rails flew in the air as the cornfield was torn to shreds. . . . Eyewitnesses claimed to have heard one [cannon] every second." [65:214]

Hooker had

. . . put [in] three dozen field pieces . . . and had the guns blast the cornfield with a methodical, murderous bombardment that flattened the tasseled corn and the defenders who had been posted in it . . . [19:430]

Those of Lawton's division who weren't killed or mutilated by the cannon fire fled out of the cornfield toward the safety of the West Woods and the Rebel stronghold near the Dunkard Church. It was the first slaughter of a day destined to see more; the two Confederate brigades lost more than half of their troops, and ". . . only 2 of the 15 regimental commanders [involved] escaped death and injury." [59]

Not quite three weeks later, when writing of the cannonade, Hooker said

. . . every stalk of corn . . . was cut as closely as could have been done with a knife, and the slain lay in rows precisely as they had stood in ranks a few moments before. It was never my fortune to witness to a more bloody, dismal battle-field. Those that escaped fled . . . from our advance, and sought refuge behind . . . trees, fences, and stone ledges [near that] Dunker Church, &c, as there was no resisting this torrent of death-dealing missives. [93:218-219] {See Photographs 6 and 7, "Confederate Dead on Mumma's Farm," next two pages.}

As the Rebels fled, Hooker's divisions rushed forward into the vacuum. The remnants of Jackson's line left by the cannonade resisted as best they could, but Hooker had sent Brigadier General George G. Meade's division to aid Doubleday and Ricketts. The Confederates

. . . stubbornly contested the ground, sometimes driving the enemy before them sometimes compelled to fall back before [the] well-sustained and destructive fire [before Jackson's men] were swept back into the West Woods [59:5]

as Hooker's men neared their battle objective of capturing the Dunkard Church. It was about 7:45 A.M., and the first fight of the day's battles was



Dead Confederate Soldiers

Died and Laid Out on Samuel Mumma's Farm. Some of the dead may have been from the 13th Alabama.



Dead Confederate Soldier

Laid out on Samuel Mumma's Farm. He may have been from the 13th
Alabama.

about to go to the Union troops in Hooker's Corps.

But it did not, for Jackson called upon Hood to attack the Federals from out of the West Woods and for D. H. Hill to attack from just below the East Woods.

The line of battle now extended over one-half mile through the corn and trees . . . [and] Jackson had called for support from D. H. Hill . . . [who] felt he could spare three of his brigades and sent up Colquitt [whose brigade included the 13th Alabama and Joseph Calhoun Burns], Ripley, and Garland's Brigade under McRae. Immediately they were drawn into the line of fire. [65:214]

As Brigadier General Jacob D. Cox, who commanded the IX Corps of McClellan's army at Sharpsburg, later wrote

Hood was sent . . . to relieve Lawton, and had been reenforced by the Brigades of Ripley, Colquitt, and McRae (Garland's), from D. H. Hill's division. [7:643]

Hood, in his memoirs, recalled that

Not far distant in our front were drawn up, in close array, heavy columns of Federal infantry; not less than two corps [Hooker's I Corps and Mansfield's XII Corps] were in sight to oppose my small command, numbering approximately two thousand effectives. [Notwithstanding] we moved forward to the assault. [45:43]

Jackson's call for Hood's troops had interrupted their breakfast mess, and

Out of the woods behind the [Dunkard] church came a new Confederate battle line -- John B. Hood's shock troops, the men angry because they had been sent forward just when they were cooking [their first] breakfast in a week. [19:430-431]

"Hood returned to the field," said Lee, "and relieved the brigades of Trimble, Lawton, and Hays, which had suffered severely" [93:149] from the cannonade and at the hands of Meade when he reinforced Doubleday and Ricketts. Hood's men ". . . drove from the West

Wood with [a] ferocity . . . attributed to [their] angry mood." 65:220]

Hood's line

. . . formed in the clearing and suddenly it was ablaze with deadly musketry, firing volleys that broke [Hooker's] column apart; then it charged, yelling after the manner of Rebels, greatly aided by [Colquitt, Garland, and Ripley of] of D. H. Hill [who] came in through a fringe of [the East] woods and farm lots off to the East. [19:431]

Confederate Brigadier General E. P. Alexander recalled that "On Hood's right the battle had been held by Colquitt's, Ripley's, and Garland's [brigades]" [1:254], and a British officer who studied the battle wrote that a Federal commander ". . . saw before him long grey lines advancing through the cornfield, with banners flying, driving steadily in front of them the few helpless remnants of Meade and Ricketts. They were Hood's command, aided on the right by three of D. H. Hill's brigades, Ripley's, Colquitt's, and Garland's, some 4,500 fresh bayonets in all." [78:252]

This new Rebel attack, first, stopped the advancing Federals in their tracks and, then, ". . . with a burst of fury they pushed into the cornfield . . . sending the Northern boys fleeing for cover. The cornfield . . . changed hands again." [65:220-221]

A member of 'the staff of Colonel Law, of the Fourth Alabama Regiment, commanding the Third (Bee's) brigade of Hood's division, remembers that he and his comrades

. . . moved forward in gallant style, making the air ring with the well-known "rebel yell," and soon met the on-coming tide of Federals, flushed with victory, and rolled it back like a wave is shattered and beat back when it strikes a rock. Soon the field was strewn with the flying fragments of the attacking force, and the ground covered thick with the wounded and dead. The pursuit was continued for about a quarter of a mile when the victorious Southrons were in turn met by a fresh corps of Federals. [54:527]

Hood's division, composed primarily of Texans, had never lost a fight to the Yankees for, as another Confederate general said, "Hood's men always fight well." [59:5] They fought well that day, better than ever in

Hood's own judgment, as they drove into and through Doubleday and Meade. As Hood said ten days later in his official report,

I . . . became engaged with an immense force of the enemy. . . It was here that I witnessed the most terrible clash of arms, by far, that has occurred during the war. The two little giant brigades of this division wrestled with this mighty force, losing hundreds of their gallant officers and men but driving the enemy from his position and forcing him to abandon his guns..
[93:923]

Eighteen years later Hood said of his 2,000 men, "Notwithstanding the overwhelming odds of over ten to one against us, we drove the enemy from the wood and cornfield." [45:43] No doubt his charge was fierce, but neither is there any doubt but that Colquitt -- including the 13th Alabama -- and Garland and Ripley, on Hood's left, helped drive the Union troops from the field even though Hooker's men did outnumber them -- but not, despite Hood's claim, by ten-to-one.

Just as the earlier attack of Doubleday, Ricketts, and then Meade had all but destroyed Lawton, Trimble, and Hays after the cannonade had decimated them, so too did the suddenness and viciousness of Hood's counterattack, with his own men and those of Colquitt, Garland, and Ripley, destroy almost all of Hooker's I Corps. Hooker and his divisions retreated from the field, the majority of them to fight no more that day.

The Rebels had driven the Federals away from the Dunkard Church, back across the open fields, back through the cornfield, and into the East Woods -- a distance of over one-half mile in less than one half-hour.

One of Hooker's brigadier generals described how his advance was turned into retreat by the ferociousness of the Confederate counter-charge:

The whole of [our Union] force in the [West] wood moved forward, when its advance was suddenly checked by a terrific fire . . . the lines of our troops were broken and thrown into confusion. All were retiring rapidly before the enemy . . . few of [our] troops rallied [so] the brigade was withdrawn . . . to the [East] wood. . . [93:245]

Now, at about 7:30 A.M. or a little later, it looked like the Rebels were about to win the first fight of the battle.

But it was not over yet, for as the Rebels swept the fleeing Union troops into their supporting batteries in the edge of the East Woods those batteries -- at almost point-blank range -- tore into them and halted the Confederate charge.

Even worse for the Rebels, Major General Joseph K. F. Mansfield's fresh troops in the XII Corps had entered the fight. His two divisions, led by Brigadier Generals A. S. Williams and George S. Greene

Brigadier General George S. Green's
Division

Brigadier General Green's Division
consisted of three infantry brigades.
They and their commanders were:

1. First Brigade, Lieutenant
Colonel Hector Tyndale. This Brigade
included the 5th Ohio Regiment and, in
that Regiment, Private John P. Murphy (of
whom we write more later).

2. Second Brigade, Colonel Henry
Stainrook; and

3. Third Brigade, Colonel William B.
Goodrich, commanding.

(whose command included the 5th Ohio Regiment), marched right by Hooker's shattered I Corps, into the East Woods, and took on the Rebels.

Though severely damaged by the point-blank artillery barrage just suffered Hood's troops held on, and "Once again there was fierce fighting as Hood made a last effort to hold . . . [but the] odds were simply too much for him, and his men backed stubbornly down . . . " [65:225]

A contemporary historian said then that

Williams deployed his own division on the right and Green's on the left, and advanced . . . across the cornfield toward the West Woods. It struck Hood's division in the cornfield, supported on its right by three of D. H. Hill's brigades [Colquitt, Ripley, and Garland]. . . Again the combat raged fiercely, and the lines wavered backward and forward across the cornfield. At the end of two hours [!] the Federal line had forced the enemy back. . . [80:270]

Thus, shortly after 7:30 A.M. when the XII Corps entered the fight,

. . . Hood's two brigades were forced to retire toward the West Woods (one of Hood's regiments, the First Texas, having sustained 82.3 percent casualties -- the greatest percentage loss incurred by any unit from either side during the entire war.) [36:141]

It was at this point, between 7:00 A.M. and 8:00 A.M. on September 17, 1862, that the 13th Alabama came into the very heart of the action at the Battle of Sharpsburg. {See K, Appendix.} As Hood's division was forced back,

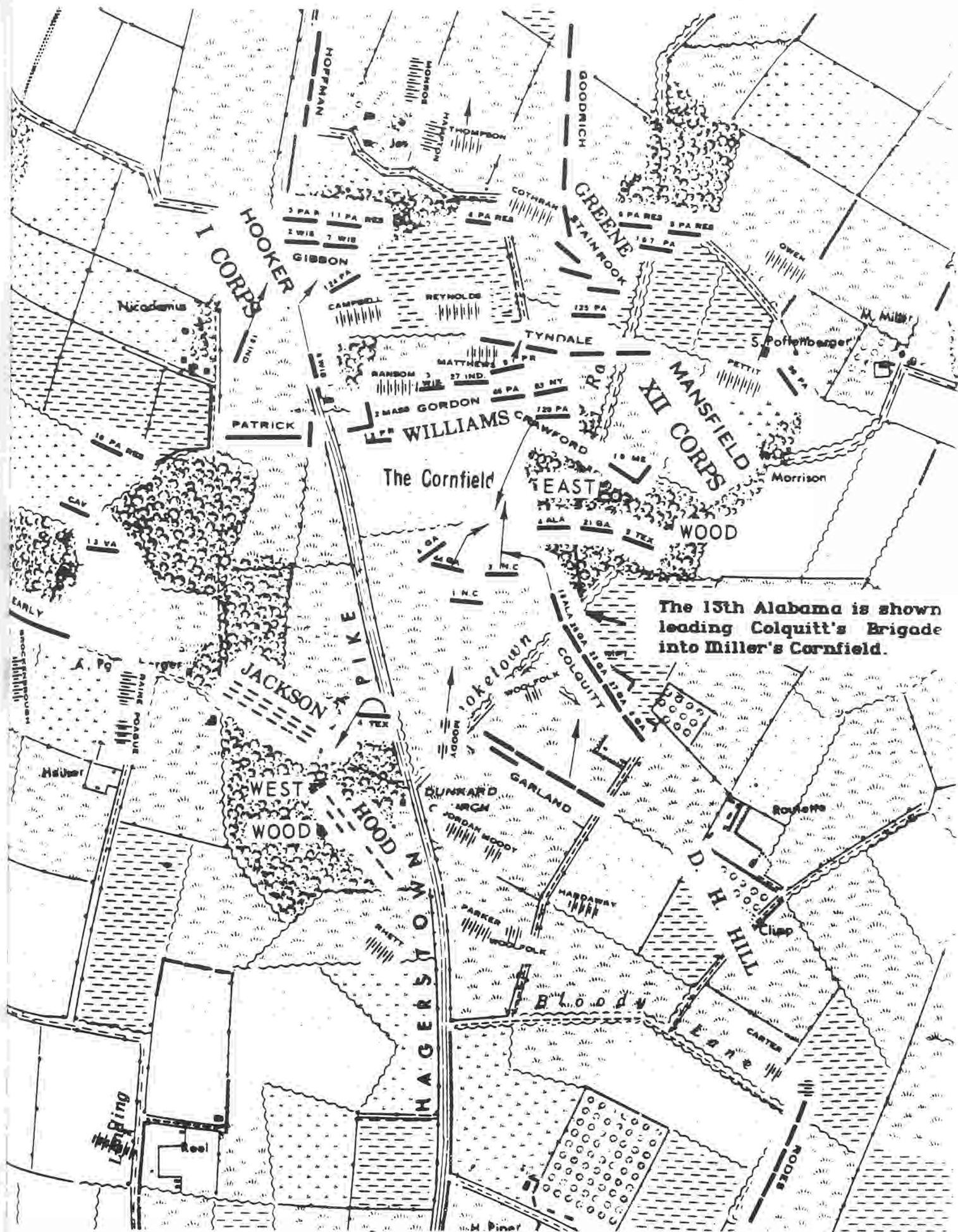
Three brigades [Colquitt, Ripley, and Garland] of Gen. Daniel H. Hill's Confederate division took Hood's place. Moving from [their position on Hood's right] Hill's men charged into the open fields on the Miller farm as well as into the East Woods to meet the onslaught of the Twelfth Corps. [36:44]

After this,

D. H. Hill's five Confederate brigades formed the left centre of the Confederate line, between (and in front of) Sharpsburg on the south and the Dunker Church on the north. They had not been mere spectators of the morning fighting, as so many of the Southern reports would lead one to suppose. On the contrary, Ripley's brigade, left brigade of D. H. Hill's command, was ordered at about 8:00 a.m. {See K, Appendix} to close in to its left and advance. It became engaged almost as far north as the southern edge of the East Woods, between that line and [Mumma's] burning building. Colquitt's brigade went into the same fight on the right of Ripley. [70:93] {See Map 9, "Situation at 8:00 A.M." and Map 10, "Close-up of Situation at 8:00 A.M.," next two pages.}

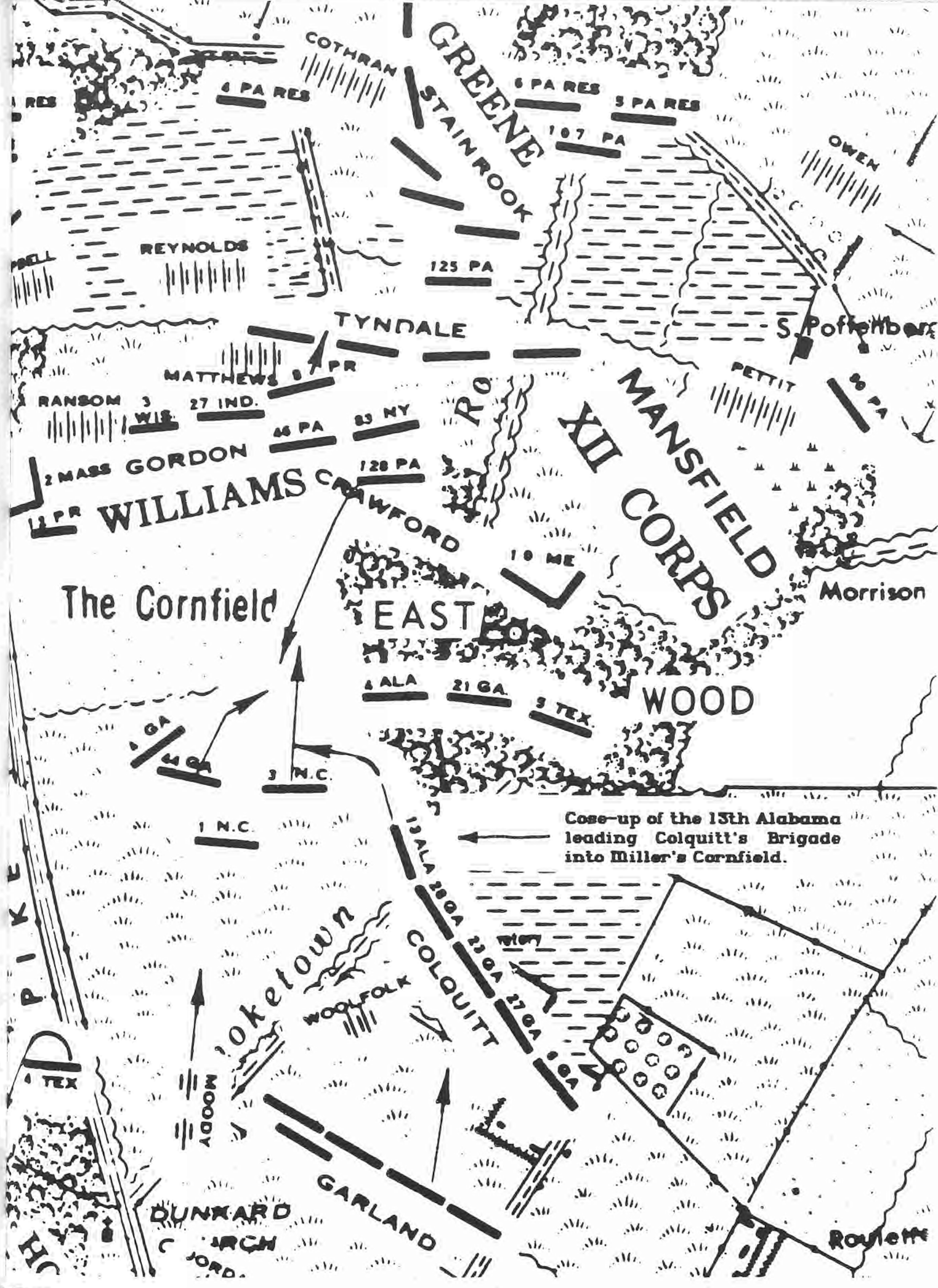
Shortly before 7:00 A.M. when Jackson had called up Colquitt, Garland, and Ripley's brigades to enter the fight, Mansfield had called on Brigadier General George S. Greene's Second Division, which included the 5th Ohio Regiment in Lieutenant Colonel Hector Tyndale's Brigade, to get ready to help relieve Hooker.

The brigade, under command of Lieut. Col. H.



The 13th Alabama is shown leading Colquitt's Brigade into Miller's Cornfield.

Situation at 8:00 A.M.



COTHMAN
GREENE
STAINROOK

6 PA RES
5 PA RES
107 PA

OWEN

REYNOLDS

125 PA

TYNDAL

S. Poffenberger

MATTHEWS

PETTIT

RANSOM 3
27 IND.

46 PA 83 NY

2 MASS GORDON

128 PA

WILLIAMS

CRAWFORD

XII CORPS
MANSFIELD

Morrison

The Cornfield

EAST

10 ME

WOOD

4 ALA 21 GA

3 TEX

1 GA 4 GA

3 N.C.

1 N.C.

Close-up of the 13th Alabama leading Colquitt's Brigade into Miller's Cornfield.

13 ALA 220 A 220 A 220 A 220 A 220 A

COLQUITT

Wicketown

WOOLFOLK

GARLAND

DUNKARD

ARCH JORD

ROUTE

PIKE

Tyndale . . . was formed at 5:30 a.m. [and marched] about 1 mile to a point of woods, where the enemy was in force and had engaged [Hooker's troops], holding them in check. . . . We then advanced . . . into the [East] woods, where the enemy were formed under cover of a fence. The action commenced. [93:506]

Lieutenant Colonel Tyndale's Brigade

Lieutenant Colonel Hector Tyndale's Brigade consisted of five infantry regiments. They and their commanders during the Battle of Sharpsburg were:

1. 5th Ohio, Major John Collins, commanding. (This regiment included Private John P. Murphy, of whom more later.)
2. 7th Ohio, Major Orrin J. Crane, commanding.
3. 29th Ohio, commandant unknown to this writer.
4. 66th Ohio, Lieutenant Colonel Eugene Powell, commanding.
5. 28th Pennsylvania, Major Ario Pardee, Jr., commanding.

Major John Collings, commander of the 5th Ohio, said "Our regiment . . . moved forward to the woods occupied by the rebels." [93:507]

The British military observer, E. W. Sheppard, said that as Greene's men, including the 5th Ohio, moved into the East Woods they were sheltered

. . . behind a slight rise [where they awaited the Rebels'] nearer approach: The foe consisted of [Colquitt's, Garland's, and Ripley's] three brigades, in echelon supporting Hood's right, and . . . they changed front to rush [toward Greene's troops]. [78:253]

As "Greene's 2,500 men moved through the East Wood and onto the road . . . Hill's three brigades, still on the cornfield, hit the advance broadside." [65:225] and stunned the Federals. In his report Colquitt said

About 7 o'clock in the morning my brigade entered the fight. It was moved to the front. . . . After a few rounds had been discharged, I ordered an advance The order was responded to with spirit by my men, and, with a shout [the Rebel yell, no doubt], they moved through the corn-field in front, 200 yards

wide, and formed [where] the enemy was near and in full view. In a moment or two his ranks began to break before our fire, and the[ir] line soon disappeared under the crest of the hill upon which it had been formed. [93:1054]

Soon after Mansfield's XII Corps entered the fight against Hill's division he was killed by Rebel fire and Williams took command, and his own division and Greene's

. . . fought bitterly for an hour and a half to break the Confederate lines in the vicinity of the Hagerstown Pike, the Cornfield, and the East Woods.

Facing the Twelfth [Corps] during this period were three Confederate brigades, Ripley's, Colquitt's, and Garland's, all of D. H. Hill's division. Although badly outnumbered, Hill's men for a time were successful in checking the Union advance. [36:155]

The Captain of the 7th Ohio, which was immediately on the right of the 5th Ohio, reported that "After a half hour's hard fighting on both sides, we succeeding in driving the enemy from his position under cover of the fence to the cornfield. . . ." [93:508] where, according to the commander of the brigade, ". . . the engagement became general, which continued for an hour and a half of severe fighting. . ." [93:506]

Colquitt's division was now in the center of the fire-storm, and the 13th Alabama very likely met the 5th Ohio in hand-to-hand combat in the cornfield as D. H. Hill's three brigades took on the five brigades in Greene's and Williams' divisions of the XII Corps. The twenty-six Yankee regiments tore at the out-manned and out-gunned fourteen Rebel regiments in an uneven fight.

Of the death-struggle between Colquitt's and Tyndale's brigades, Major Collins of the 5th Ohio said this (about his fight with Colonel Fry's 13th Alabama:

. . . after a short but severe contest [we] succeeded in driving them before us. From the woods the enemy retired to a corn-field, followed by us, and while in the corn our regiment engaged [one of Colquitt's regiments] in hand-to-hand combat, using clubbed guns, a portion of the men having no bayonets. The enemy at this point was severely punished. After a short resistance the enemy gave way, and, being

closely pursued, sustained great loss. We followed the retreating foe through the corn into a open field beyond, where, our men being out of ammunition, we halted behind the brow of a hill. . . [93:507] {See Map 11, "Situation Between 8:30 A.M. and 8:40 A.M." and Map 12, "Close-up of Situation Between 8:30 A.M. and 8:40 A.M.," on next two pages.}

No one -- not Lee, not McClellan, not one of the hundreds of civilian observers on the higher hills near the battleground -- could really see what was going on in that terrible fight to the death in the cornfield, or anywhere else between the East and West Woods. The sun had not quite evaporated all the mist, and the thick smoke from cannons, rifles, and pistols mixed with the smoke from burning buildings and hung low -- like a blinding smog -- over the battlefied.

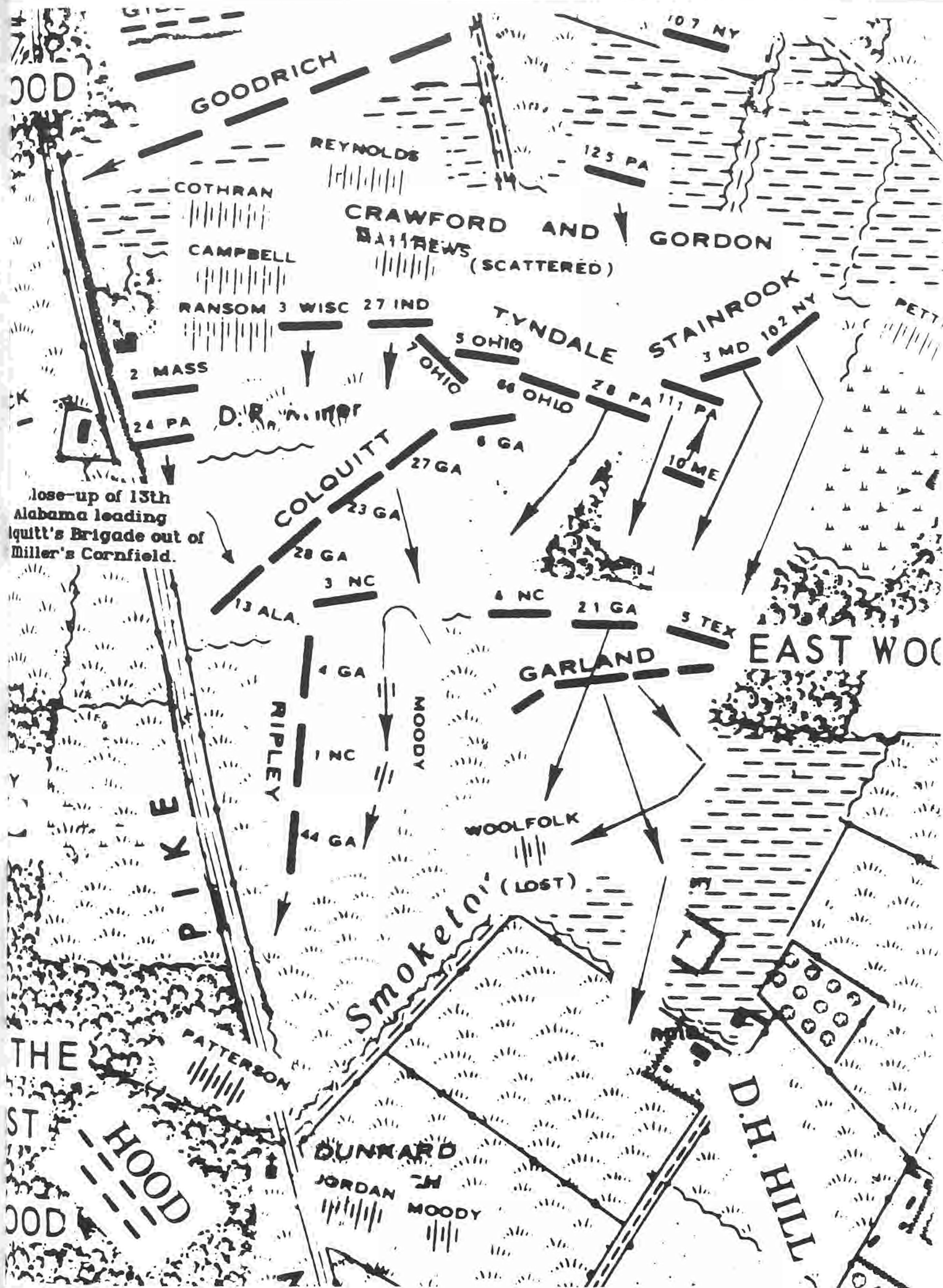
Only the murderous clatter of close range rifle fire and screaming voices told observers what was happening. Hand to hand combat -- charge and counter-charge -- it was a fight to the finish such as neither Army had ever experienced. . . The two lines nearly tore each other to shreds. Men wrote later that there was never anything like this -- that the bullets were like hail stones dropping on an 'enormous tin roof' in a fierce storm. [65:217]

Because no observer could see, and because there seem to be no detailed written reports or memoirs of this bitter, brutal face-to-face fight between the 13th Alabama and the 5th Ohio, we will never know exactly what happened. As James Murfin says,

Few men were able to record with any degree of accuracy this phase of the battle so great was the confusion. Official records speak in generalities, unable to determine the [exact] hour, the direction of specific troops movements or the casualties involved. [65:221]

We do know the two regiments clawed at each other in a struggle that lasted over an hour. We do know that, sometime before 9:00 A.M., the superior numbers of the Union forces slowly, then more rapidly, began to push the Rebels back. Colquitt said that

Garland's brigade [on] my right had given way, and the enemy was advancing. . . The [Confederate] regiments on my left having also failed to advance



[when Colquitt's regiment did], we were exposed to a fire from all sides and nearly surrounded [93:1054]

by Greene's division. The 13th Alabama, which had led Colquitt's division into the fight, and its comrades in the 4th, 23rd, 27th, and 28th Georgia, stood alone at the point against the superior numbers and firepower of the 5th Ohio and the other regiments -- the 7th and 66th Ohio, and the 28th Pennsylvania -- in Tyndale's brigade of Greene's division.

Colquitt went on to say that he could have held, had Hill any reserves to send in, but Hill did not; and help from Jackson

. . . could not reach us in time. The enemy closed in upon our right so that our ranks were scarcely distinguishable. At the same time his line in front [of us] advanced. My line stood firm until every field officer but one had fallen, and then made the best of their way out. [93:1054]

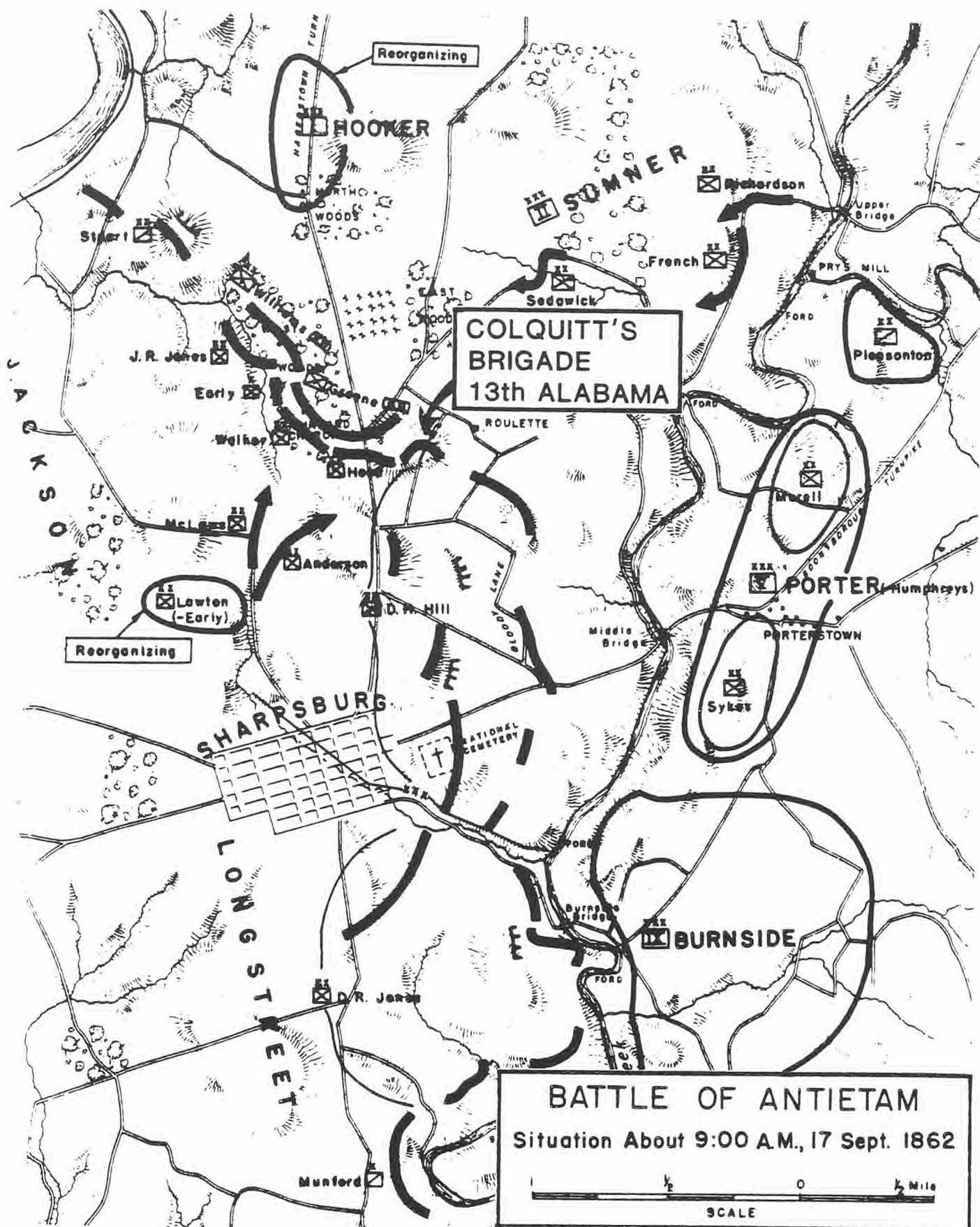
Hill, in his laconic way, simply said the Rebel fight was

. . . handsomely supported by Colquitt and Ripley. The first line of Yankees was broken [by them, and they] pushed vigorously forward, but to meet another, and yet another, line. Colquitt had gone in with 10 field officers; 4 were killed, and 5 badly wounded, and the tenth had been stunned by a shell. The men were beginning to pull back. . . [93:1022]

William Frassanito says that "For more than an hour the fighting surged back and forth on the Miller farm until Hill's three brigades, driven to the point of exhaustion, fell back toward the safety of the West Woods." [36:44] {See Map 13, "Situation About 9:00 A.m.," next page.}

It became a rout; no, more, it became a slaughter. The Federals who had won the struggle against Colquitt's three brigades described their victory thus, in reports written immediately after the battle:

. . . [there was a] great slaughter to the enemy, when the enemy gave way in confusion and disorder before the furious onset of our troops. We pursued them rapidly, capturing many prisoners, and strewing the ground with their dead and wounded. After



pressing them closely for a distance of one-half mile, we were obliged to slacken our fire, as our ammunition had given out. [93:506]

And:

. . . we succeeded in driving the enemy from his position under cover of the fence to the corn-field, when they fell back in confusion and disorder. Our troops closely pursued them, capturing many prisoners and covering the ground with their dead and wounded. [93:508]

And:

The retreat of this line of the enemy soon became a rout. My regiment took a number of prisoners, who were sent to the rear [as we] moved rapidly forward. . . [93:509]

And:

After severe fighting through a thick wood in which the enemy was concealed, we completely routed them, strewing the ground with their dead and wounded. The enemy gave way before us, and, upon our advancing rapidly, they abandoned three pieces of artillery -- one, a 12-pounder iron gun, the other two, 12-pounder brass pieces. A most gallant charge was made by the regiment. As the enemy advanced upon us the second time we again drove them back, killing many. [93:509]

And:

So terrific was the fire of our men that the enemy fell like grass before the mower; so deadly was the fire that the enemy retired in great disorder, they not being able to rally their retreating forces. We charged them in a heavy piece of woods, driving them out of it, capturing a large number of prisoners (among

them was a lieutenant-colonel and a lieutenant), and made terrible havoc in the ranks, covering the ground with the slain, many of them officers. [93:506]

And, finally, in an 1865 post-war manuscript, one of the victorious

Ohioans wrote:

For an hour and a half we thus remained [on the Miller farm], and fought. . . . At last the [Rebel] line began to waver, and General Greene shouted "Charge!" With a yell of triumph we started, and levelled bayonets; and terror-stricken, the rebels fled. . . . We pursued them fully three-fourths of a mile, killing, wounding, and taking prisoners almost every rod. Their colors full, a private soldier leaped forward and tore them from the staff. [99:138]

Francis Palfrey wrote that

At about 9 A.M., Rodes was ordered to move to the . . . front, to assist Ripley, Colquitt, and McRae [commanding Garland's brigade]. He says that he had hardly begun . . . before he saw that Colquitt and McRae had met with a reverse, and that the best thing he could do . . . would be to form a new line in rear of them. [70:93]

That struggle was well-remembered by one Alabaman who was there:

The regiments had become scattered . . . and were now in a corn field, where a new alignment was impossible. Retreat became necessary, and the order was given to 'fall back.' There was no rout, no frantic rushing to the rear, though the fire of musketry and cannon was fearful. The men fell back in squads -- often stopping to replenish their empty cartridge-boxes from those of the dead and the wounded, and then turning and returning the deadly fire of the overwhelming numbers before whom they were slowly and doggedly retiring. When they reached

the [West] woods from which they had debouched . . . 4,000 strong, only 700 could be mustered to form a new line, to hold the Northern hordes in check. [54:527]

Only 700 of 4,000 left! Hood, then Hill's three brigades, had been beaten. "The Confederates . . . lost at least 50 percent [of their men]. Hood's Division and Hill's three brigades were beaten to a pulp -- all of this in less than two hours," said Murfin. [65:221] "The loss of life in Jackson's two divisions and in the divisions of Hood and D. H. Hill," said Palfrey, "had been awful." [70:141]

General Hill, after the 13th Alabama and the 6th, 23rd, 27th, and 28th Georgia had been all but wiped out, simply said "Most of [Colquitt's] brigade took no further part in the action." [70:141] But many did, in the other major fights of that day. Perhaps among those who survived the battle in the cornfield, to fight again later, was Joseph Calhoun Burns.

A reporter for the *New York Tribune* visited Miller's farm two days later and reported that "Pale and bloody faces are everywhere upturned. They are said and terrible, but there is nothing that makes one's heart beat so quickly as the imploring look of sorely wounded men who beckon wearily for help you cannot stay to give." [67]

Did Joseph Calhoun Burns lose his life in the brutal face-to-face, hand-to-hand fight between the 13th Alabama and the 5th Ohio

We will never know. The only remaining Confederate military records simply say that Joseph Calhoun Burns was "killed in battle, Sharpsburg, Md., Sept. 17th, 1862," and his "Death [was] not reported [at time of battle]." [Company Muster Roll, 13th Regiment Alabama Infantry, October 14, 1862; and Reports from Division of Deceased Soldiers, Office of Adjutant and Inspector General, Confederate States, to Auditor's Office of the Treasury Department, February 20, 1863, February 28, 1863, December 18, 1863, and April 1, 1864. From National Archives.]

And from the commandant of his company, Captain A. S. Reaves,

I certify that Joseph C. Burns, a Private of [my] Company . . . of the 13th Reg't. of Ala. Vols. . . . was killed in the Battle of Sharpsburg Md. on the 17th day of September 1862. . . .

Given near Fredericksburg Va. this the 3rd day of February 1863. ["Final Statement for Deceased Soldiers Act, by A. S. Reaves, Capt, Comdg Co. "D" 13 Ala Vols, [and attested as] genuine [by] W. H. Fowler, Adjt for Ala." From National Archives.]

It is certainly possible Joseph Calhoun Burns died in the fight

with the 5th Ohio, for the best available evidence is that 'it was the 5th Ohio which destroyed the 13th Alabama in the cornfield that morning, and killed or wounded unto death so many Alabamans.

An important part of that evidence is the fact that the 5th Ohio captured the Regimental Confederate Battle Flag of the 13th Alabama. Such a capture, highly prized by victors, is not easily made -- and usually made only after the near total destruction of a regiment.

The capture of a battle flag is one of the most prized spoils of victory, so much so that the *Official Records* of the Civil War stated that

A medal of honor was awarded to Private John C. Murphy, of [the 5th Ohio] regiment, for the capture of the flag of the Thirteenth Alabama Infantry. [93:507]
{See {Photograph 8, "Battle Flag of the 13th Alabama Infantry Regiment," next page.}}

The book *America's Medal of Honor Recipients* contains this entry:

MURPHY, JOHN P.

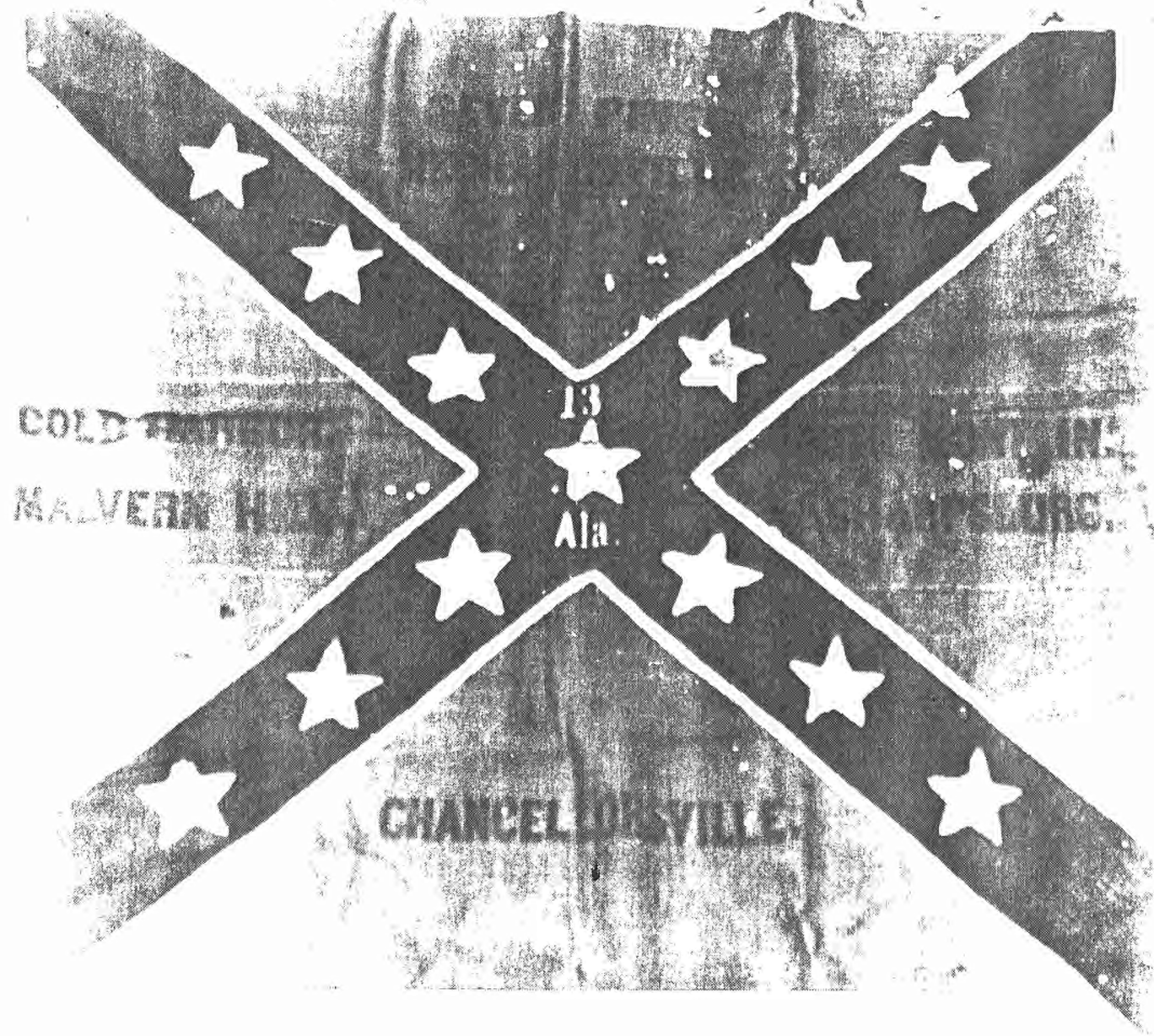
Rank and organization: Private, Company K. 5th Ohio Infantry. *Place and date:* At Antietam, Md., 17 September 1862. *Entered service at:* Cincinnati, Ohio. *Birth:* Ireland. *Date of Issue:* 11 September 1866. *Citation:* Capture of flag of 13th Alabama Infantry (C.S.A.). [3:856]

One wonders if Private Joseph Calhoun Burns and Private John C. Murphy were among those who fought hand-to-hand and, indeed, if Private Murphy was he who, in the name of restoring the Union, caused Private Burns to sacrifice his life in the name of secession.

We will never know. Indeed, it may be that Joseph Calhoun Burns survived the destruction of the 13th Alabama on Miller's farm. We know that some did, for the remnants of Colquitt's, Garland's and Ripley's brigades gathered on the Hagerstown Pike, and fought again in the Bloody Lane, after being driven from the northern part of the battlefield.

Perhaps Joseph Calhoun Burns was one of those who survived the slaughter and defeat in Miller's cornfield. Stranger things have happened in wartime.

The tide of the first great battle that day had turned once again when Greene's troops emasculated Hood's division and the three regiments from



One of the Battleflags of the 13th Alabama

Hill's division, and drove them from Miller's farm far into the West Woods.

"Only a desperate Confederate stand stopped Greene's men at the Dunkard Church" [88:24], but elsewhere on the field it was give and take. Both sides were exhausted by 9:00 A.M. but there, was still no decision.

At about nine o'clock [Sumner and his II Corps] arrived upon the field at the head of Sedgwick's division. He found affairs in a desperate state; Hooker's corps had been repulsed and driven back [by Hood and Hill's three brigades] and the Twelfth [Corps] was barely holding its own [against Jackson]. [80:270]

Thus, just before

. . . Sumner came up the whole aspect of the battle had changed. Hill and Hood had sprung to the relief of Jackson. Their united force was far inferior in numbers to that of Hooker and Mansfield, but they were inordinately strong in artillery. Hill, with but about 3000 infantry, had more than 80 guns at his command. These, in front and upon the left, with the mounted artillery upon the right, under [Jeb] Stuart, were brought to bear upon Hooker's advancing corps. This was checked, then wavered, and when the enemy, with hardly half their numbers, charged from the sheltering woods, Hooker's corps broke and fled in utter rout, not to appear again upon the field. Their rout, moreover, threw into confusion a part of Mansfield's corps. [40:399]

But Lee and Jackson were in even worse shape, and at that moment Jackson saw ". . . a mass of blue-clad infantry emerging from the East Woods . . . [a new Union corps], Major General Edwin V. J. Sumner's II Corps [was] moving up for the morning's third major Federal attack. [88:26]

It was Major General John Sedgwick's division, fresh troops eager to get at the Rebs, and

On they came, nearly 6,000 of them [in three

brigades and fifteen regiments] through the East Woods -- by this time littered with the human debris of both armies -- across the cornfield . . . [toward] the West Woods [59:6],

intending to join forces with Greene and drive the Rebels entirely off the left side of the battlefield.

The Confederates, now in position at the extremities of the West Wood and beyond, watched Sedgwick's 2d Division march across the fields. It was a magnificent sight. Sedgwick's division was divided into columns of brigades about 70 yards apart as if in parade formation. Rifles and bayonets glittered in the bright sun which was now burning away the mist. [65:227]

It was not a subtle, but frontal, attack, and the tactically sly Jackson summoned troops from the center and right to join with Major General Lafayette Laws' division, which had just reached Sharpsburg from Harper's Ferry.

Jackson saw an opportunity snatch a victory from what had been a near certain defeat, and he renewed his call for help. No Rebel could let "Stonewall" down, and they rode, marched, walked, and hobbled to Jackson in response to his call. Major Heros Von Borke, later describing it, declared it was ". . . astonishing to see men without shoes, whose lacerated feet often stained their path with blood, limping to the front to conquer or fall with their comrades." [92:234]

Did the survivors of the 13th Alabama, perhaps including Joseph Calhoun Burns, respond to Jackson's call? Confederate General E. P. Alexander, in his memoirs, said that "The Confederates followed in pursuit [of Sedgwick] and . . . [s]ome of the brigades of D. H. Hill's left joined in the counter-stroke, and the Federals were driven [back]. [1:259] Thus it is possible some in Colquitt's, Garland's, or Ripley's brigades were involved as they constituted Hill's left, while his other two brigades, Rodes and Anderson, were on Hill's right.

Other evidence, however, is that by about 9:00 A.M. all five of Hill's brigades -- whatever was left of them -- were either positioned at the Sunken Road where it met the Hagerstown Pike, or well on their way to that position.

As Sedgwick's division marched in close ranks toward the West

Woods,

Jackson craftily places [his] men behind the rocks and ridges at the western [rear] fringe of the woods. Soon they formed a great semicircle whose outer points perfectly encompassed [88:26]

the Federals as they marched right into the woods. Almost 10,000 Rebs were hidden in the nooks and crannies of rocks and trees, and for once they out-numbered their enemy.

There had been a pause in the battle, and an eerie silence as if even death had stopped its work for a few moments, and Sumner ". . . seemed to have the field to himself. All was quiet. The firing had stopped. The First Corps [Hooker] was virtually non-existent and the Twelfth Corps [Mansfield] was dissipated to the point of inactivity. [65:233]

If Sumner saw little of Hooker's or Mansfield's men, he saw nothing of Jackson's, and in the next twenty minutes -- twenty minutes! -- Jackson would destroy him.

Suddenly [Jackson's] trap was sprung. Caught within a pocket of almost encircling fire, in such compact formation that return of fire was impossible, Sedgwick's men were . . . [c]ompletely at the mercy of the Confederates. [88:30]

But there was little mercy. "Fire came from three directions. The rear flanks were getting it just as much as the front lines. Confederate artiller, which had gotten the range of the open field behind, pinned down any hope of mass escape" [65:236] from the Rebel attack. In those twenty minutes Jackson shot down almost 2,000 men -- half! -- of Sedgwick's troops.

Those Union troops that could fled from the West Woods. Some ran back to the East Woods, some back to the North Woods. Anywhere to escape; but only some 2,500 did. As the Federals flew for their lives the Rebels charged after them. The tide of battle had turned once again, and now it seemed the Southerners would carry the first great battle of the day. Jackson's men poured out of the West Woods, across the fields, and into the East Woods.

But it was to no avail. The Yankee batteries in the East Woods, loaded

with grape and cannister, mowed them down as some fifty cannons opened up on the charging men. Their "Rebel yell" was no match for the blanket of cannon fire, and their retreated back into the West Woods to lick their wounds, just as the Federals stayed in the East Woods to lick theirs.

The tide of battle had ebbed and flowed, but carried neither side to victory -- nor to defeat -- in the first of the three battles that constituted the Battle of Sharpsburg.

Four hours of steady fighting had left both sides exhausted. Hooker's First corps was broken; little was left of Mansfield's Twelfth Corps; now one-third of Sumner's Second Corps was on the run. And still Lee's left held. Dead and wounded in the cornfield numbered better than 12,000. Twelve thousand in four hours; three bitter Federal attacks; three equally bitter Confederate counter-attacks.

The fighting on Lee's left died out around 10:30 A.M. With the exception of occasional artiller exchanges, more annoying than anything else, there was no battle in this area the rest of the day. [65:241]

The Rebels had withstood the first Union assault. The left side of Lee's line was anchored in the West Woods, to remain secure there until Lee voluntarily withdrew about 48 hours later.

Miller's 50-acre farm had proved to be the center of the morning battle, and his 12-acre cornfield was in the eye of the storm, for

Nearly every charge made struck this field either in going or returning. . . . This ground was about the hardest fought over of any on the [entire] battlefield; the dead lay so thick from the Dunkard Church [in the West Woods] to the East Woods that one could have stepped from man to man without stepping on the ground. Between 1,200 and 1,500 were buried in this one field. [76]

The tide of battle had swept back-and-forth over the cornfield fifteen (15!) times, and still it was a no-man's land when the battle ended. [5:2]

Surely the best eye-witness report of human cost of that first battle of the day came from a member of Jackson's staff, Henry Kyd Douglas, who

said that when taking a message from Jackson to Early after the battle that night,

On my way to Early I went off the [Hagerstown] pike and was compelled to go through a field in the rear of Dunker Church, over which, to and fro, the pendulum of battle had swung several times that day. It was a dreadful scene, a veritable field of blood. The dead and dying lay as thick over it as harvest sheaves. The pitiable cries for water and appeals for help were much more horrible to listen to than the deadliest sounds of battle. Silent were the dead, and motionless. But here and there were raised stiffened arms; heads made a last effort to lift themselves from the ground; prayers were mingled with oaths, oaths of delirium; men were wriggling over the earth; and midnight hid all distinction between the blue and grey. My horse trembled under me in terror, looking down at the ground, sniffing the scent of blood, stepping falteringly as a horse will over or by the side of human flesh; afraid to stand still, hesitating to go on, his animal instinct shuddering at this cruel human mystery. Once his foot slid into a little shallow filled with blood and spurted a little stream on his legs and my boots. I had a surfeit of blood that day and I couldn't stand this. I dismounted and giving the reins to my courier I started on foot into the wood of Dunker Church. [30:175]

The Second Phase: 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M., The Sunken Road Becomes the Bloody Lane

After the first battle of the day ended in a stalemate the remnants of Colquitt's, Garland's, and Ripley's brigades were reunited with the other two brigades in Hill's Division -- Rodes' and Anderson's -- and positioned around and in the Sunken Road.

Six hundred yards below the Dunkard Church on the Hagerstown Pike, a narrow lane turned to the east, ran for some 500 yards to the crest of the ridge. At this point the road turned sharply south and then through a series of turns dipped through a deep ravine and back to the crest of the ridge to the Boonsboro Pike. For lack of a better name, the first 1,000 yards was called the Sunken Road which was apropos since the shallow

dropped ten feet or more below the terrain level. On the south was the Piper farm, on the north the Roulette and Clip farms. [65:246] {See Map 6, following page 26, and Map 14, "Situation About 10:00 A.M.," next page.}

The second battle of the day was to take place here as the Federals would try to break through Lee's line at the Sunken Road and move over the fields behind it to capture Sharpsburg and will the Battle of Sharpsburg.

Colquitt's Brigade, what was left of it, including the 13th Alabama -- and perhaps Joseph Calhoun Burns -- and part of Garland's Brigade were positioned near the Roulette farm, north of the Sunken Road, to serve as pickets.

In a few minutes Brigadier General William H. French's Division, consisting of three fresh brigades in ten infantry companies, approached the Roulette farm. French ". . . advanced . . . over the open farm lands" [7:645] where

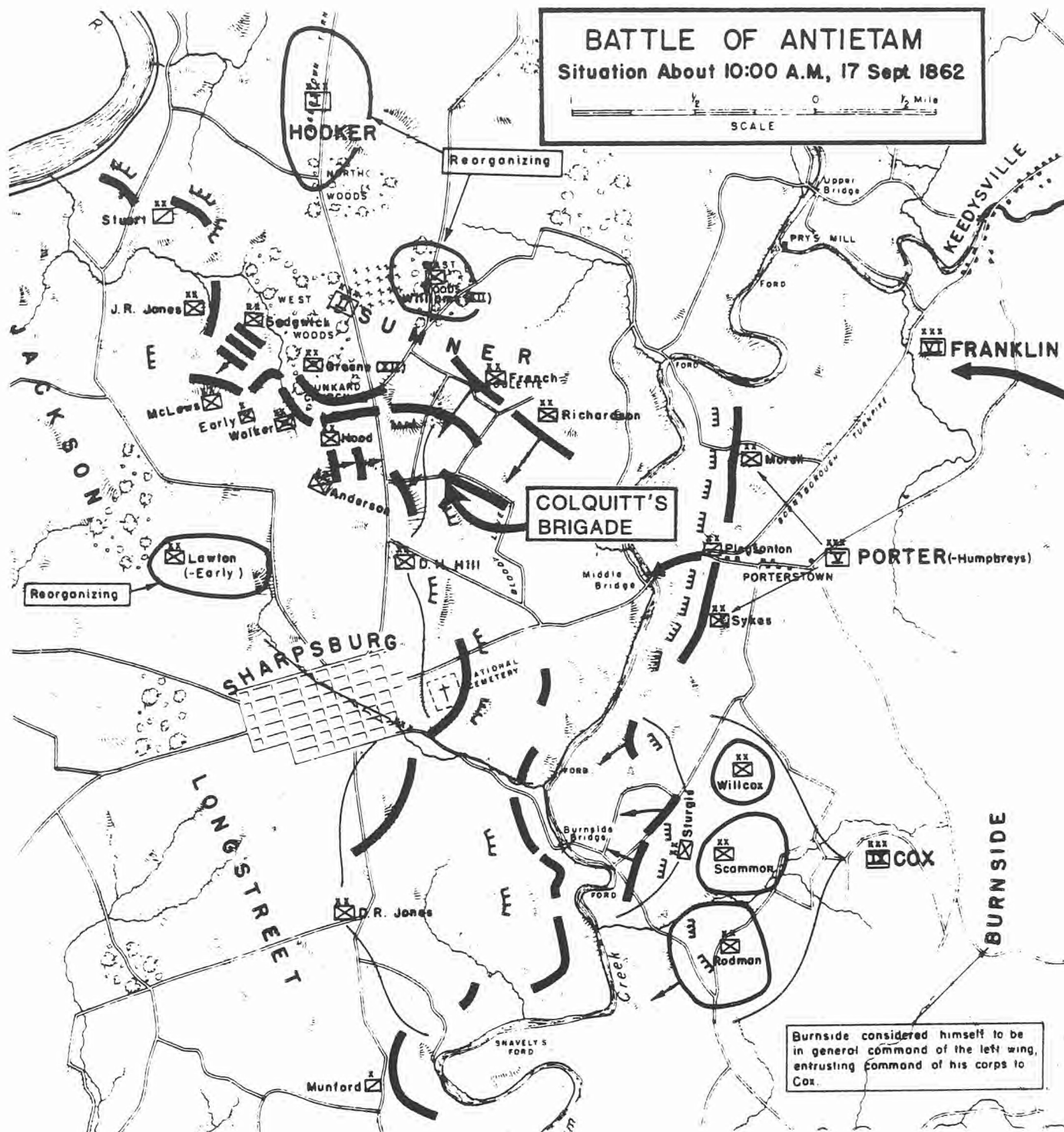
. . . he encountered the advanced Confederate pickets at the Roulette farm. Colquitt was out in front, but the best that could be expected was a delaying action. It was only a matter of minutes after initial contact that they were forced to withdraw. They made a stubborn stand but when Capt. T. P. Thomson of the 5th North Carolina (Garland's Brigade) yelled, "They are flanking us," the ranks broke and fled to the rear. A number of Confederates headed for the old farm house, scrambling for the nearest and safest shelter they could find. The cellar door was open and they leaped in only to find the door slammed shut behind them by the enemy. [65:247]

The enemy who had slammed the door, when reporting it to his Brigade Commander, said

. . . we formed line of battle and moved forward a distance of about one-half mile, where we became engaged, our position being in a corn-field west of William Roulette's farm-house, the enemy occupying a position on the summit of a hill to our front. The Fifth Maryland Regiment being slightly in our advance, I reserved my fire until they broke, which threw three

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SCALE



companies of my right wing into confusion, when we opened fire from the left and immediately proceeded to rally the right, which having been effected, we held our position under a severe cross-fire [and soon drove the Rebels back]. . . . Our colors are riddled with shot and shell, and the staff broken. Captain Gibbons, of Company B, deserves notice, who, finding the farm-house occupied by a large force of the enemy, ordered his company to advance and fire, scattering them and driving a portion of them into the cellar, where, by closing the door, a large number of them were captured. [93:333, 334]

Colquitt's and Garland's men retreated toward the Sunken Road to rejoin the rest of Hill's Division, where they were positioned ". . . on the ridge above the shallow road looking north. . . . [where] the few men Colquitt could now muster were formed on Rodes' left." [65:246, 247]

E. W. Sheppard, the British observer of the Battle of Sharpsburg, wrote that

Hill, who held command in Lee's centre, had reunited some of the troops of Garland's, Colquitt's, and Ripley's broken brigades [perhaps including the 13th Alabama and Joseph Calhoun Burns] to the regiments of Rodes and G. B. Anderson . . . and had posted them in the Bloody Lane . . . [78:259]

Hill's Division, composed of three broken and exhausted, and two relatively fresh, brigades would have to fight French's whole Third Division for possession of the Sunken Road. And Major General Israel B. Richardson's equally fresh First Division was right behind French.

Against those odds the Rebels had little hope, but their spirits were raised by a visit from General Robert E. Lee himself, who told them that help was coming, that they must hold, and that if the Federals broke through their lines the Army of Northern Virginia would be defeated. At this Colonel John B. Gordon, commandant of the 6th Alabama,

. . . replied to Lee in a loud voice so his men could hear: "These men are going to stay here, General, till the sun goes down or victory is won!" Years later

when Gordon recorded these memories he added, "Alas! Many of the brave fellows are there now. [65:246-247; 35:84]

If Joseph Calhoun Burns survived the shelling the 13th Alabama took when on Mumma's farm, and the ferocious hand-to-hand battle with the 5th Ohio in Miller's cornfield, perhaps he and the remnants of the 13th Alabama were with Colquitt in the Bloody Lane.

One wonders if he saw and heard Lee's promise of help and Lee's plea for strength lest the Army of Northern Virginia be lost. If he did, and if he also heard Gordon's spirited response, it is possible he fought and died in the Bloody Lane within the hour of hearing his General urge him on.

The Union brigades advanced to the Sunken Road where the thin Rebel line waited. A Union general described the opening of the fight:

Directly on my front, in a narrow road running parallel with my line, and, being washed by water, forming a natural rifle-pit between my line and a large corn-field, I found the enemy in great force, as also in the corn-field in rear of the ditch. As my line advanced to the crest of the hill, a murderous fire was opened upon it from the entire force in front. My advance farther was checked. . . [93:327]

A Confederate general described it, too:

My troops held the most advanced position on this part of the field. . . [when] the predicted assault came. The men in blue . . . formed in my front, an assaulting column four lines deep. The front line came to a 'charge bayonet'. . . . Their gleaming bayonets flashed like burnished silver in the sunlight . . .

To oppose man against man was impossible, for there were four lines of blue to my one line of gray. The only plan was to hold my fire until the advancing Federals were almost upon my lines. No troops with empty guns could withstand the shock. My men were at once directed to line down upon the grass. Not a shot would be fired until my voice should be heard commanding "Fire!"

The stillness was literally oppressive, as this column of Union infantry moved majestically toward

us. Now the front rank was within a few rods of when I stood. With all my lung power I shouted "Fire!" Our rifles flamed and roared in the Federals' faces like a blinking blaze of lightning.

The effect was appalling. The entire front line, with few exceptions, went down in the consuming blast. Before the rear lines could recover, my exultant men were on their feet, devouring them with successive volleys. The [fight] now became furious and deadly. [39:84-87]

The Rebel fire was devastating, as attested by the commanding officer of one of the Union companies on the receiving end:

Having advanced steadily through woods and corn-fields, driving all before us, we met the enemy in two lines of battle, posted in a road or ravine 4 feet below the surface of the adjoining field, with a third line in a corn-field in the rear, the ground gradually rising so that they were able to fire over the heads of those in the ravine; our right was also exposed to the sudden and terrible fire from the troops who succeeded in breaking the center division of the line of battle. We were at this time about 20 paces off the enemy, and returned their fire for some time with much coolness and effect. A charge was then ordered and attempted, but our second line, composed of new levies, instead of supporting our advance, fired into our rear. We had now lost one-third of our men, and 8 officers commanding companies were either killed or wounded. Under these circumstances we fell back gradually to a stronger position . . . [93:337]

But there was a second line of Federal troops, and a third, and a fourth, and . . .

Yet Hill's entrenched men would not give up the Sunken Road. Wave after wave of Union troops came at them but Colquitt's, Rodes', and Anderson's men fought them off time after time.

A Federal officer marveled at the stamina of Hill's men. He wrote:

It is beyond all wonder how such men as the

rebel troops can fight on as they do; that, filthy, sick, hungry, and miserable, they should prove such heroes in fight, is past explanation -- one regiment stood up before the fire of two or three of our long-range batteries and of two regiments of infantry, and though the air around them was vocal with the whistle of bullets and screams of shells, there they stood, and delivered their fire in perfect order; and they they continued to stand. [65:250]

What had promised to be a quick, if not easy, Union thrust through the Rebel defenses set up by Hill at the Sunken Road turned into a long, brutal fight as the brigades of Colquitt, Rodes, and Anderson -- soon to be supported by six brigades from Major General Richard H. Anderson's Division, just arrived from Harper's Ferry -- not only checked the Federals but attempted to counter-attack. The Confederates were still outnumbered, and Richardson's Division was coming to the aid of French's Division, for the stubbornness and determination of the Rebels had cost French dearly.

Rodes described this phase of the fight for the Bloody Lane:

The enemy came to the crest of the hill overlooking my position, and for five minutes bravely stood a telling fire at about 80 yards, which my whole brigade delivered. They then fell back a short distance, rallied, were driven back again and again, and finally lay down just back of the crest, keeping up a steady fire, however. In this position, receiving an order from General Longstreet to do so, I endeavored to charge them with my brigade and that portion of Colquitt's which was on my immediate left. The charge failed, mainly because the Sixth Alabama Regiment, not hearing the command, did not move forward with the others, and because Colquitt's men did not advance far enough. [93:1037]

But later reports from Union officers proved Rodes' was wrong in believing Colquitt's men and Rodes' own 6th Alabama had not advanced far enough. Some of the Rebels had broken through on the left; they pushed the Federals all the way back to the Roulette farm, and got behind French's lines. A Union officer described it thus:

. . . we marched rapidly to the support of French,

who was being hard pressed. . . . General Richardson then ordered me to move forward, which was done with great precision under a terrific fire of shot and shell. . . . the enemy charged and drove back the troops on our right [so five Union brigades moved] to the right, to check any attempt the enemy my make to reach our rear.

The enemy [had reached] a post in the confield in the rear of Roulette's farmhouse . . . [93:299]

Rodes called his men back to the Sunken Road in the hope of mounting another attack:

Hastening back [to the Sunken Road] . . . it became evident to me then that an attack by us must, to be successful, be made by the whole of Anderson's brigade, mine, Colquitt's, and any troops that had arrived on Anderson's right. My whole force at this moment did not amount to over 700 men -- most probably not to that number. [93:1037]

This time Rodes attacked the center of the Union lines, but French was by now supported by Richardson's Division and the Rebels were greatly outnumbered as R. H. Anderson's troops were not yet in position.

Rodes' assault on the center was doomed to fail, for just as he

. . . initiated his attack, Maj. Gen. Israel B. Richardson with Sumner's 3rd division . . . arrived on the field with his three brigades. On his right was Meagher's (pronounced "Mar") famous Irish brigade, the 29th Massachusetts, the 88th, 63rd, and the celebrated fighting 69th New York. On the left was Brig. Gen. John C. Caldwell's Brigade, the 5th New Hampshire, 88th Pennsylvania, the 7th, 61st, and 64th New York. [65:254]

Of that attack and the Federal counter-attack, an officer in French's Division said that

Being foiled [in the attack on the flank, Rodes] made a heavy charge on my center, thinking to break my line, but was met by my command and and

repulsed with great slaughter. I then, in turn, ordered a charge, which was promptly responded to, and which resulted in driving the enemy entirely from the ditches, &c., and some distance into the corn-field beyond. In this charge my command captured about 300 prisoners, the enemy in his flight leaving on the field several stand of colors, which were taken by some parties outside of my brigade whilst we were pursuing him. [93:327]

An officer in Richardson's Division said about the same thing:

The enemy made one more effort to break my line, and this time the attack was made in the center. . . . The whole brigade then moved forward in a line, driving the enemy entirely out of the corn-field and through the orchard beyond, the enemy firing grape and canister from two brass pieces in the orchard to our front, and shell and spherical-case shot from a battery on our right. While leading his men forward under the fire, Colonel Barlow fell, dangerously wounded by a grape-shot in the groin. By command of General Richardson, I halted the brigade, and, drawing back the line, reformed it near the edge of the corn-field. [93:286]

Colquitt, Rodes, and Anderson had no hope as French, to the right, "followed by Richardson on the left, pushed vigorously upon Hill, driving him back toward the right and rear, into and beyond the sunken road, which formed a right angle with his previous line. Kimball, of French's division, and Meagher, of Richardson's, gained the border of this natural rifle-pit at almost the same moment." [40:400]

The Federals rushed at the Rebels in the Sunken Road but, once again, were stopped, if only temporarily. It was a brutal, brutal battle. Thomas Livermore, a Union officer in the battle, and later a respected historian of it, said "The thundering of artillery, the roaring of bursting shells, and rolling of musketry, the humming of deadly fragments and bullets, and sometimes the yells of the rebels and our own cheers all seemed to fill the whole horizon and drive peace away forever." [56:136]

As example of the intensity of the violence, Oliver T. Reilly, who

remembered the Battle of Sharpsburg as a boy, and for over 35 years served as guide to the battlefield and collector of stories about it, offered these anecdotes:

Mr. Emory Thomas . . . said that several days after the battle he with others . . . counted 17 bullet wounds and holes in [a dead Confederate soldier in Bloody Lane];

Mrs. Mary Carter and sister [said] that several weeks after the battle as they were coming up from the Roulette farm they would slip at places in Bloody Lane where the blood was thickest from the dead and wounded. [76]

The overwhelming power of the Federals, coupled with a misunderstood order on the part of the Confederates, resulted in the Union capture of one end of the Sunken Road where an enfilading fire all but destroyed the Rebel first line of defense.

Hill's Division was about to be decimated. Anderson was killed resisting French and Richardson, and those two Union commanders "... were gaining slowly but steadily upon Hill. Colquitt's brigade had suffered severely, and fell back to the sunken road, where a vain attempt was made to rally them; they broke, and disappeared from the fight" [40:400] so that, after hours of constant battle the 13th Alabama -- and the 6th, 23rd, 27th, and 28th Georgia -- were no longer a recognizable military unit.

Yet the Rebels tried to cling to the Sunken Road in face of everything Rodes, like Colquitt, was wounded, and the Yankees under

[Brigadier General John C.] Caldwell [who was distantly related to Joseph Calhoun Burns, through association between the Calhoun and Caldwell families, as illustrated by the fact that the former Senator from South Carolina and Vice President of the United States, John C. Calhoun had the middle name of Caldwell] steadily gained ground and pushing forward broke the line from [the] shallow to the crest of the road bed, sweeping Wright's and Anderson's Brigades back to the south side of the road and on into Piper's cornfield. Now only Rodes was left, still entrenched in the sunken part of the road. [Colonel Francis C.] Barlow's 61st New York swung to its left, facing Rodes' right. The Confederates were making a desperate attempt to hold,

by now firing over their comrades bodies. The fire was as intense as it was on any part of the field that day, but the Federals were now on the crest of the ridge and on the road, firing down. Now nothing could save the vulnerable Rebels. [65:258]

The enfilading fire was too great, and the Sunken Road had to be abandoned. One Union officer whose men poured in the fire from the flank reported that

The portion of the enemy's line which was not broken then remained lying in a deep road, well protected from a fire in their front. Our position giving us peculiar advantages for attacking in flank this part of the enemy's line, my regiments advanced and obtained an enfilading fire upon the enemy in the aforesaid road. Seeing the uselessness of further resistance, the enemy, in accordance with our demands, threw down their arms, came in in large numbers, and surrendered. Upward of 300 prisoners thus taken by my regiments were sent to the rear . . . [93:289]

Another Federal officer wrote:

. . . we came to the front, and moved up and over the hill under a heavy fire of musketry and a cross-fire of artillery. We found the enemy lying in a road or ditch just under the brow of the hill. The regiment, however, steadily moved up and over the hill in the most determined manner and spirit, breaking the center of the enemy's line, and killing or wounding nearly all that left the ditch to make their escape through the corn-field. Then we improved the advantage we had gained by changing front forward on first company, thereby flanking the rest of their line. The colonel gave the command, "Cease firing," when I called out to them to surrender. They at once threw down their arms and came in. I think by this movement we captured 275 or 300 prisoners. [93:291]

Confederate General Hill, quoting from Rodes, explains why the Sunken Road was lost:

The Yankee fire had now nearly ceased [in the

face of our resistance], and but for an unfortunate blunder of Lieutenant-Colonel [J. N.] Lightfoot, Sixth Alabama, no farther advance would have been made by them. General Rodes had observed a regiment lying down in his rear and not engaged. He [Rodes] says:

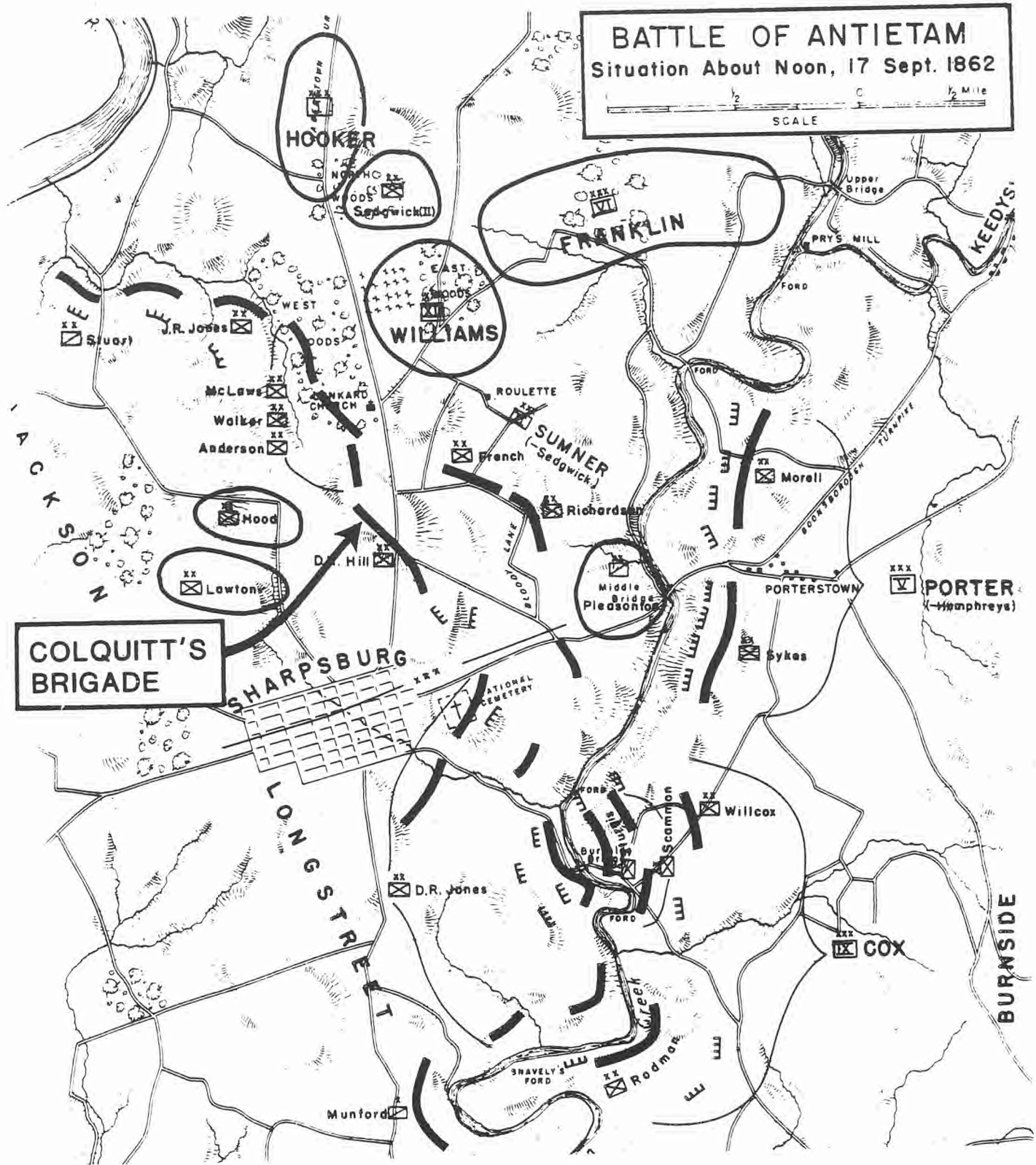
"As the fire was now desultory and slack, I went to the troops referred to, and found that they belonged to General Pryor's brigade. Their officers stated that they had been halted by somebody; not General Pryor. Finding General Pryor in a few moments, and informing him as to their conduct, he immediately ordered them forward. Returning toward the brigade, I met Lieutenant-Colonel Lightfoot, Sixth Alabama, looking for me. Upon his telling me that the right wing of the regiment was exposed to a terrible enfilade fire, which the enemy was enabled to deliver by their gaining somewhat upon [General G. B.] Anderson, I ordered him to hasten back and to throw his right wing back and out of the old road referred to. Instead of executing the order, he moved briskly to the rear of the regiment, and gave the command, 'Sixth Alabama, about face; forward march.'" Major Hobson, of the Fifth, seeing this, asked him if the order was intended for the whole brigade. He said, 'Yes,' and thereupon the Fifth and the other troops on their left retreated. I did not see their retrograde movement until it was too late to rally them, and for this reason: Just as I was moving on after Lightfoot, I heard a shot strike Lieutenant Birney (aide), who was immediately behind me. Wheeling around, I found him falling, and that he had been struck in the face. He found that he could walk after I raised him. I followed him a few paces and watched him until he reached a barn, a short distance in the rear, where he first met some one to help him in case he needed it. As I turned toward my brigade, I was struck heavily by a piece of shell on my thigh. At first I thought the wound was serious; but finding, upon examination, that it was slight, I turned toward the brigade, when I discovered it, without visible cause to me, retreating in confusion. I hastened to intercept it at the Hagerstown road. I found, though, that, with the exception of a few men from the Twenty-Sixth, Twelfth, and Third, and a few under Major Hobson, of the Fifth (not more than 40 in all), the brigade had disappeared from this portion of the field. This small number, together with some Mississippians and North Carolinians, about 150 in all, I rallied and stationed behind a small ridge leading from the Hagerstown road."

General G. B. Anderson still nobly held his ground, but the Yankees began to pour in through the gap made by the retreat of Rodes. . . . The Yankees crossed the old road which we had occupied in the morning, and occupied a corn-field and orchard in advance of it. They had now got within a few hundred yards of the hill which commanded Sharpsburg and our rear. Affairs looked very critical. [93:1023-1024] {See Map 15, "Situation About Noon," next page.}

The loss of the Sunken Road did not mean the Rebels were strictly on

BATTLE OF ANTIETAM

Situation About Noon, 17 Sept. 1862



the defensive, for rather than beat a hasty retreat they attacked and tried to recover it. A Captain in the 18th New Hampshire describes one such attack:

At this time we were subjected to a most terrible fire of artillery and I recollect one shell or case shot which burst in the middle of "G," the color company, and killed or wounded eight men and tore a great hold in one of our flags, and our regiment, already weakened, was fast losing men from its ranks. At this trying time the rebel infantry advanced for the third time against us, when the colonel moved us into the sunken road and there we planted ourselves for the last struggle.

On looking about me I found that we were in the old, sunken road mentioned several times before, and that the bed of it lay from one to three feet below the surface of the crest along which it ran. In this road there lay so many dead rebels that they formed a line which one might have walked upon as far as I could see, many of who had been killed by the most horrible wounds of shot and shell, and they lay just as they had been killed apparently, amid the blood which was soaking the earth. It was on this ghastly flooring that we kneeled for the last struggle. The rebels advanced through the corn, firing, the artillery played upon us without mercy, and now we were harder pressed than ever before, with no help at hand from the reserves which we could see. . . .

As the rebel advance became apparent, we plied the line with musketry with all our power, and no doubt with terrible effect, but they still advanced. A color-bearer came forward within fifteen yards of our line, and with the utmost desperation waved a rebel flag in front of him. . . .

At last there came a time (we were afterwards told) when we were hard pushed, since we had lost one third of our number and the enemy were closing upon us in overpowering force. . . . [and] at the time when we were fighting most desperately, it was suddenly perceived that the 81st Pennsylvania of our brigade . . .

came into line . . . and opened fire by file as each man arrived in line facing the enemy, with a rattling, roading sound that was joyful to our ears. Together we soon either drove the enemy off or caused him to slacken or cease his fire, and soon after we were relieved by another regiment of our division which blunderingly moved through us in line, while we, though sadly cut up, moved regularly, "by companies to the rear." [56:140-142]

The weight of the Union army, brigade after brigade after brigade against the constantly diminishing Rebels was too much, and the Sunken Road had to be left in the hands of the Federals. It was a precarious moment for Lee's Army of Northern Virginia:

There is no question that after the Federals had crossed the sunken road, the danger to Lee was extreme. D. H. Hill says that there were no troops left to hold the centre except a few hundred rallied from various brigades, that the Yankees had got within a few hundred yards of the hill which commanded Sharpsburg and the Confederate rear. [70:121]

Rebel General E. P. Alexander later said that "when Rodes' brigade left the sunken road. . . . Lee's army was ruined, and the end of the Confederacy was in sight." [88:36]

The Yankee capture of the Sunken Road ". . . had uncovered a great gap in the center of Lee's line. A final plunge through this hole would sever the Confederate army into two parts that could be destroyed in detail. 'Only a few scattered handfuls of Harvey Hill's division were left,' wrote Gen[eral] William Allen. . . . 'There was no body of Confederate infantry in this part of the field that could have resisted a serious advance.'" [88:39]

But somehow the Rebels stopped the Yankees short of the Piper farm. A Union officers describes the end of the fight, after capturing the Sunken Road:

We pressed forward across the hill, and came in full sight of the enemy. We were here subjected to a destructive fire from the enemy's battery on the right. By a successful flank movement we here assisted in resisting the enemy's attempt to turn our right. Then came the order to drive the enemy from their strong

position on the left in the corn-field [beyond the Sunken Road]. Here now was the terrific part of the engagement. The men were falling thick and fast, but never faltering. The battalion pressed forward and completely routed the enemy, who fell in a disorganized mass, leaving the field strewn with their dying and dead. . . . [93:303]

Only "a heroic rally by D. H. Hill's men prevented a breakthrough into the town" [88:36] of Sharpsburg. The thin Gray line had held against overwhelming odds, and the Blue line had lost its will. "The battle for the little sunken road had lasted for three and a half hours. It was the bloodiest period of the day. Federal casualties numbered nearly 3,000. There was no way of determining Confederate losses." [65:262]

Casualties in Hill's Division

Brigade	Killed	Missing	Wounded	Total
Colquitt	129	184	518	831
Ripley	110	124	506	740
Rodes	111	255	289	655
Anderson	64	202	299	565
Garland	46	187	210	443
TOTALS	460	952	1,822	3,234

Brigadier General Nathan Kimball, commanding French's Division, recounted in his report to French the cost of the fight which saw the Yankees capture the Sunken Road but fail to break through the Rebel defense:

For three and a half hours of this time we were upon the field, and maintained our position without any support whatever. My men having exhausted all their ammunition, the fight was maintained for some time with the supplies stripped from the bodies of their dead and wounded comrades.

Every man of my command behaved in the most exemplary manner, and as men who had determined to save their country or die. . . . The battle was fought under your own eye, general, and I need not tell you how terrible was the conflict, and a glance at the position held by the rebels tells how terrible was the punishment inflicted on them. The corn-fields on the

front are strewn with their dead and wounded, and in the ditch first occupied by them the bodies are so numerous that they seem to have fallen dead in line of battle, for there there is a battalion of dead rebels.

[93:327-328]

Thomas Livermore, soldier and historian of Antietam, said the Rebel dead ". . . lay so thick in the [Sunken] road that a man could have walked its length without touching ground." [65:262]

A Northern brigadier general described what he saw in the Sunken Road:

I was astonished to observe our troops moving along the front and passing over what appeared to be a long, heavy column of the enemy without paying it any attention whatever. I borrowed a glass from an officer, and discovered this to be actually a column of the enemy's dead and wounded lying along the hollow road . . . Among the prostrate mass I could easily distinguish the movements of those endeavoring to crawl away from the ground; hands waving as if calling of assistance, and others struggling as if in the agonies of death. [65:262]

The horror of the struggle at the Sunken Road was described by a writer from the North:

With the falling back of the Confederates I went up past Roulette's house to the sunken road. The hillside was dotted with prostrate forms of men in blue, but in the sunken road, what a ghastly spectacle! The Confederates had gone down as the grass falls before the scythe. Words are inadequate to portray the scene. Resolution and energy still lingered in the pallid cheeks, in the set teeth, in the gripping hand. I recall a soldier with the cartridge between his thumb and finger, the end of his cartridge bitten off, and the paper between his teeth when the bullet had pierced his heart, and the machinery of life -- all the muscles and nerves -- had come to a standstill. A young lieutenant had fallen while trying to rally his men; his hand was still firmly grasping his sword, and determination was visible in every line of his face. I

counted fourteen bodies lying together, literally in a heap, amid the corn rows on the hillside. The broad, green leaves were sprinkled and stained with blood.

[7:684]

Other reports say that blood from the dead and wounded, both North and South, literally ran in rivulets down the Sunken Road, and mixed with dirt and dust to form what was in truth a bloody mud. [76]

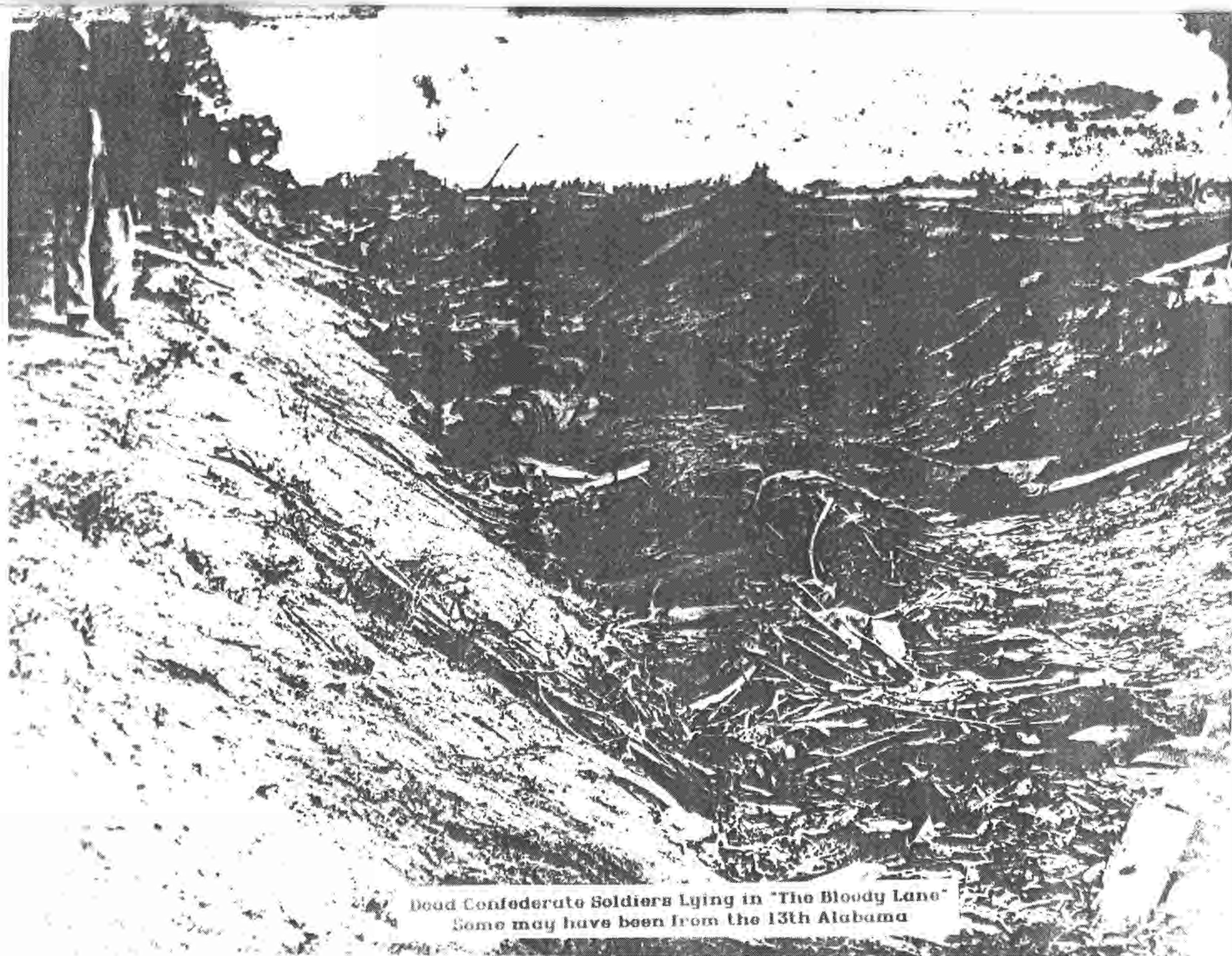
It is no wonder that, after September 17, 1862, the Sunken Road became known as "Bloody Lane." It is still known today as the Bloody Lane. {See Photographs 9 and 10, "Confederate Dead in Bloody Lane, September 19, 1862," next two pages.}

The second of the three battles that comprised the Battle of Sharpsburg ended as did the first: with neither winner nor loser -- or, more truthfully, with no winner and both losers. Once again the determination of the Rebels' troops, and the superior quality of Lee's military leadership over that of McClellan, frustrated a superior number of better equipped Yankees.

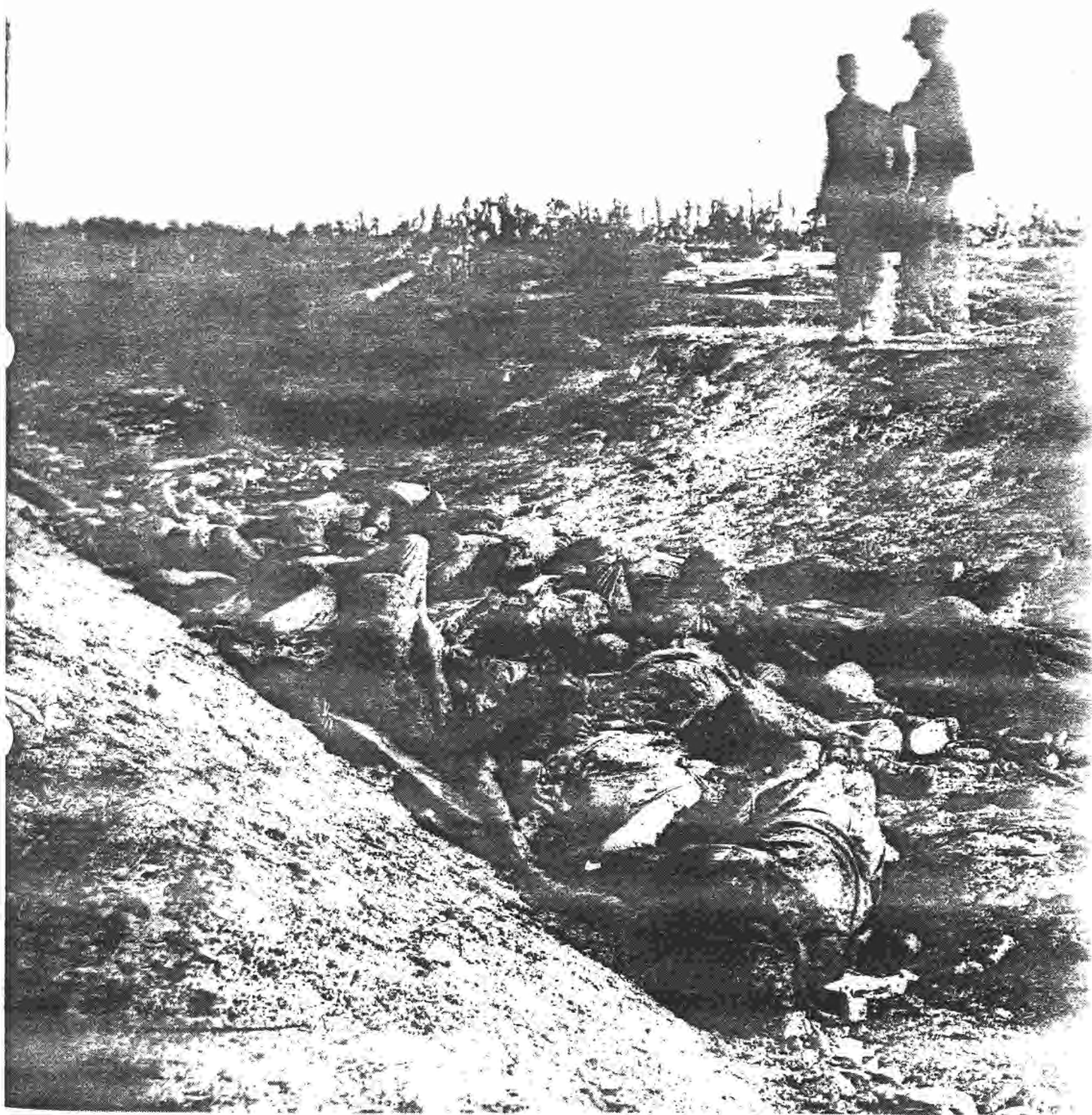
All evidence and scholarship leads to the conclusion that, if Billy Yank had been as well-led as Johnny Reb, the Union troops could have kept moving through the Bloody Lane, over farm lands into Sharpsburg, and pushed Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia into the Potomac River. Such a great victory for the Union would, without doubt, have meant the Civil War would have ended far sooner than it did.

This dogged determinism, this esprit d'corps, of the men in gray and butternut, is illustrated by an anecdote about the inspirational leadership of Robert E. Lee. After the Federals had captured the Bloody Lane, and when it was thought they were resting a bit before bringing up fresh troops in order to smash through and capture Sharpsburg, Lee sent out orders to gather together all the remnants of his crippled brigades. In

. . . the course of two or three hours about 5,000 men had been collected at this point. They were then formed into companies, regiments, and a brigade. It was, perhaps, an anomolous organization in warfare. No man knew any officer over him, nor even his file leader, or the man to the right and left of him. And thus was taken away every influence which gives men confidence and conduces to their greatest efficiency as soldiers. It was about four o'clock in the evening when



Dead Confederate Soldiers Lying in "The Bloody Lane"
Some may have been from the 13th Alabama



Dead Confederate Soldiers Lying in "The Bloody Lane"
Some may have been from the 13th Alabama

this strangely constructed brigade was ordered to "fall in" and march to the front. A little after they had begun marching in column of fours by the right flank, the men at the head of the column saw General Lee standing with bared head and calm but anxious expression under the shade of an apple tree close beside their line of march. As they passed he said, loud enough to be heard by several companies at a time, "Men I want you to go back on the line, and show that the stragglers of the Army of Northern Virginia are better than the best troops of the enemy" [underscoring in original text]. The effect as may be imagined was magnetic. "The Stragglers' brigade," as it was afterwards called, was thrilled with enthusiasim. . . [54:528]

Perhaps there was no way for Lee to defeat McClellan, but neither was there any way Lee could lose with such men as he had and with such leadership as he gave them.

The Third Phase: 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M., The Final Struggle, at the Lower Bridge

The third and last fight of the Battle of Sharpsburg came south of the town, at the Lower Bridge, where four divisions of Union Major General ". . . Ambrose E. Burnside's [IX Corps] had been trying to cross a bridge over Antietam Creek since 9:30 a.m. Some 400 [!] Georgians had driven them back each time." [5:1]

After the bloody but inconclusive fight at the Sunken Road, at about 1:00 P.M., Burnside made another and more determined effort to get across the bridge. Two of the companies managed, under cover of cannon fire directed upon the Georgians of Brigadier General Robert Toombs' brigade, to cross the Antietam. The Federals finally had their foot in the door and the Rebels, being so few, were easily divided so that the thousands of men in the IX Corps could pour across.

A Rebel in a brigade that was to relieve Toombs' troops recalled the start.

. . . the fight has commenced down at Antietam bridge, where Toombs lies with his Georgians. The Yankees have commenced to shell their front, which, we all know, is but a prelude to the deadlier charge of the infantry.

The shells begin to sail over us as we lay close behind the fence, shrieking its wild song, a canzonet of carnage and death. These missiles howled like demons, and made us cower in the smallest possible splace, and wish we had each a little red cap in the fairy tale, which, by putting on our heads, would make us invisible. But what is that infernal noise that makes the bravest duck their heads? That is a "Hotchkiss" shell. Thank goodness, it has bursted far in the rear. It is no more destructive than some other projectile, but there is a gread deal in mere sound to work on men's fears, and the moral effect of the Hotchkiss is powerful.

The tremendous scream of this shell is caused by a ragged edge of lead which is left on the missile as it leaves the gun. In favorable positions of light the pheonomenon can sometimes be seen as you stand directly behind the gun of the clinging of air to the ball. The missile seems to gather up the atmosphere and carry it along, as our globe carries its air through space. Men are frequently killed by the wind of a cannon ball. There is a law of Nature which causes the atmosphere to cling to the earth, or which presses upon it with a force on the surface of fifteen pounds to the square inch. Does the same law pertain to cannon balls in their flight?

The enemy are silent, but it is the calm that is but a prefix to a hurricane. It comes suddenly and the musketry at the bridge breaks out fiercely; it rises and swells into a full compass; there is sharp work going on. In about an hour Toomb's brigade came rushing back, its lines broken, but its spirit and morale all right. It retreated to the village [of Sharpsburg] and was reformed and held in reserve to us. [49:15]

With the rout of Toombs' men the Union troops marched toward Sharpsburg in great number and, once again, it seemed as if the men in butternut must be swept away. "Brushing aside the depleted [Rebel] ranks in the rifle pits above the bridge, the Federals struck Brigadier General David R. Jones' four lonely brigades on the hills southeast of Sharpsburg" [88:43], and as all other Confederate

units had earlier been sent north to fight at the cornfield or at the Sunken Road, Jones' was driven backwards.

A Private in the 17th Virginia , Kemper's Brigade of Jones' Division, recalled forty years later, in 1902, what happened:

Yes, that thin string of tattered men, lying there [awaiting Burnside's men] with their bright rifles clasped tight in their hands, had marched onward, and onward, though their gaunt frames seemed as if they would sink at every step, they had followed their colors on the hot, dusty march, with fatigue relaxing their muscles, closing their eyes and deadening their wills, they had dragged themselves along to the battle field with stone-bruised feet; they had fought and won battles on empty stomachs; they had kept steadily on making their allotted march, famishing and nearly naked, covered with dust, half devoured by vermin; they marched onward, still onward, through all the smoke of battle, through the torrid heat of a summer's sun; they had followed their flags through all of this with cheers like the songs of gods. . . .

Our brigade was a mere outline of its former strength, not a sixth remaining. Our regiment, the Seventeenth, that once carried into battle eight hundred muskets, now stood on the crest [before Sharpsburg], ready to die in a forlorn hope, with but forty-six muskets. . . .

All at once, an eight gun battery, detecting our position, tried to shell us out, preparatory to their infantry advance, and the air around was filled by the bursting iron. . . .

During the fire a shell burst not ten feet above where the Seventeenth lay, prone on their faces, and literally tore poor Appich, of Company E, to pieces, shattering his body terribly, and causing blood to spatter over many who lay around him. A quiver of the form, and then it remained still. Another Hotchkiss came screeching where we lay, and exploded, two more men borne to the rear; still the line never moved nor uttered a sound. The shells split all around, and

knocked up the dust until it sprinkled us so, that if it intended to keep the thing up, it threatened to bury the command alive.

Oh, those long minutes that we lay with closed eyes, expecting mutilation, and a shock of the plunging iron, with every breath we drew -- would it never end? But it kept up for fully fifteen minutes, and the men clenched their jaws tight and never moved; a line of corpses could not have been more stirless. . . .

The officers cry in low tones, "Steady men! Steady, they are coming. Ready!"

The warning click of the hammers raised as the guns are cocked, run down the lines, a momentary solemn sound -- for when you hear that the supreme moment has come.

The hill in our front shut out all view, but the advancing enemy were close on us, they were coming up the hill, the loud tones of their officers, the clanking of their equipments, and the steady tramp of the approaching host was easily distinguishable.

Then our Colonel said in a quiet calm tone, that was heard by all, "Steady, lads, steady! Seventeenth, don't fire until they get above the hill."

Each man sighted his rifle about two feet above the crest, and then, with his finger on the trigger, waiting until an advancing form came between the bead and the clear sky behind.

The first thing we saw appear was the gilt eagle that surmounted the pole; then the top of the flag, next the flutter of the Stars and Stripes itself slowly mounting -- up it rose; then their hats came in sight; still rising, the faces emerged; next a range of curious eyes appeared, then such a hurrah as only the Yankee troops could give broke the stillness, and they surged toward us.

"Keep cool, men -- don't fire yet," shouted Colonel

[Montgomery D.] Corse; and such was their perfect discipline that not a gun replied. But when the bayonets flashed above the hill-top the forty-six muskets exploded at once, and sent a leaden shower full in the breasts of the attacking force, not over sixty yards distant. It staggered them -- it was a murderous fire -- and many fell; some of the struck for the rear, but the majority sent a stunning volley at us, and but for the fence there would have been hardly a man left alive. The rails, the posts, were shattered by the balls; but still it was a deadly one -- fully one-half of the Seventeenth lay in their tracks; the balance that is left load and fire again and again, and for about ten minutes the unequal struggle is kept up. The attacking force against [Toombs'] brigade, as I learned, was a full brigade, three thousand strong, and against our little remnant is a full regiment. What hope is there? None. And yet for the space of a few rounds the combat is kept up, the combatants not over thirty yards apart. We stood up against this force more from a blind obstinacy than anything else, and gave back fire for fire, shot for shot, and death for death. But it was a pin's point against Pelides' spear. Our Colonel falls wounded; every officer except five of the Seventeenth is shot down; of the forty-six muskets thirty-five are dead, dying or struck down; three, myself among them, are run over by the line in blue, and throw up our hands in token of surrender.

Two of them stopped to take our small squad in charge, and the rest of their line hurried forward towards the village [of Sharpsburg]. As we turned to leave we saw our whole brigade striking for the rear at a 2:40 gait. The South Carolina brigade on our left had given away, and the enemy swept on triumphantly, with nothing to bar his progress and save the village, the coveted prize, from falling into their hands. But Toomb's Georgia brigade, which had been driven from the Antietam bridge early in the forenoon, had reformed in our rear, and covered the hamlet

[We] three prisoners were hurried to the rear, and on reaching the opposite crest found that our fire had been very destructive; each man had probably

killed or wounded his man. On the ground surrounded by a group of officers and a surgeon was the Colonel of the regiment that had charged the Seventeenth [Virginia]. He appeared to be mortally hurt, and was deathly pale. Hurrying us back a few hundred yards on the top of a hill, out of reach of shot and shell, captured and capturers turned to look at the scene before them. As far as our eye could reach our forces seemed to be giving ground; and as line after line of the Yankee reserves pushed forward it looked dark for the Rebels -- it seemed to us as if Sharpsburg was to be our Waterloo. [49:16-19]

It was not to be the Rebel's Waterloo, even though by 4:00 P.M. Burnside's bluecoats were less than one-half mile from Sharpsburg. At the very moment when defeat seemed but a matter of minutes -- as it was -- Major General Ambrose P. Hill's Light Division, perhaps 3,000 strong in five brigades, was arriving from Harper's Ferry. "At Lee's urgent order, Hill had left Harper's Ferry early . . . and covered the 17 miles from Harper's Ferry to the Potomac in 7 hours." [88:44]

Private Hunter of the 17th Virginia, now a captive of the Yankees on a hill behind the lines, could see the arrival of A. P. Hill's troops. Of this he later wrote:

One moment the lines of blue are steadily advancing everywhere and sweeping everything before them; another moment and all is altered. [Then the] ranks of blue come rushing back in disorder, while the Rebels followed fast [after them] and then bullet-hitting around us cause guards and prisoners to decamp.

What was the import of this?

None could tell, but still the reflux tide bore us back with it. At last a prisoner, a wounded Rebel officer, was being supported back to the rear, and we asked him, and the reply came back: "Stonewall Jackson has just gotten back from Harper's Ferry, those troops fighting the Yankees now are A. P. Hill's Division."

Well, we felt all right, if Old Stonewall was up, none need care about the result. {N.B. Private Hunter's memory is faulty here, as "Stonewall" Jackson had not ". . . just

gotten back from Harper's Ferry"; Jackson had been at Sharpsburg all through the battle. A. P. Hill's Light Division was, however, part of Jackson's Corps, and it had just come up.)

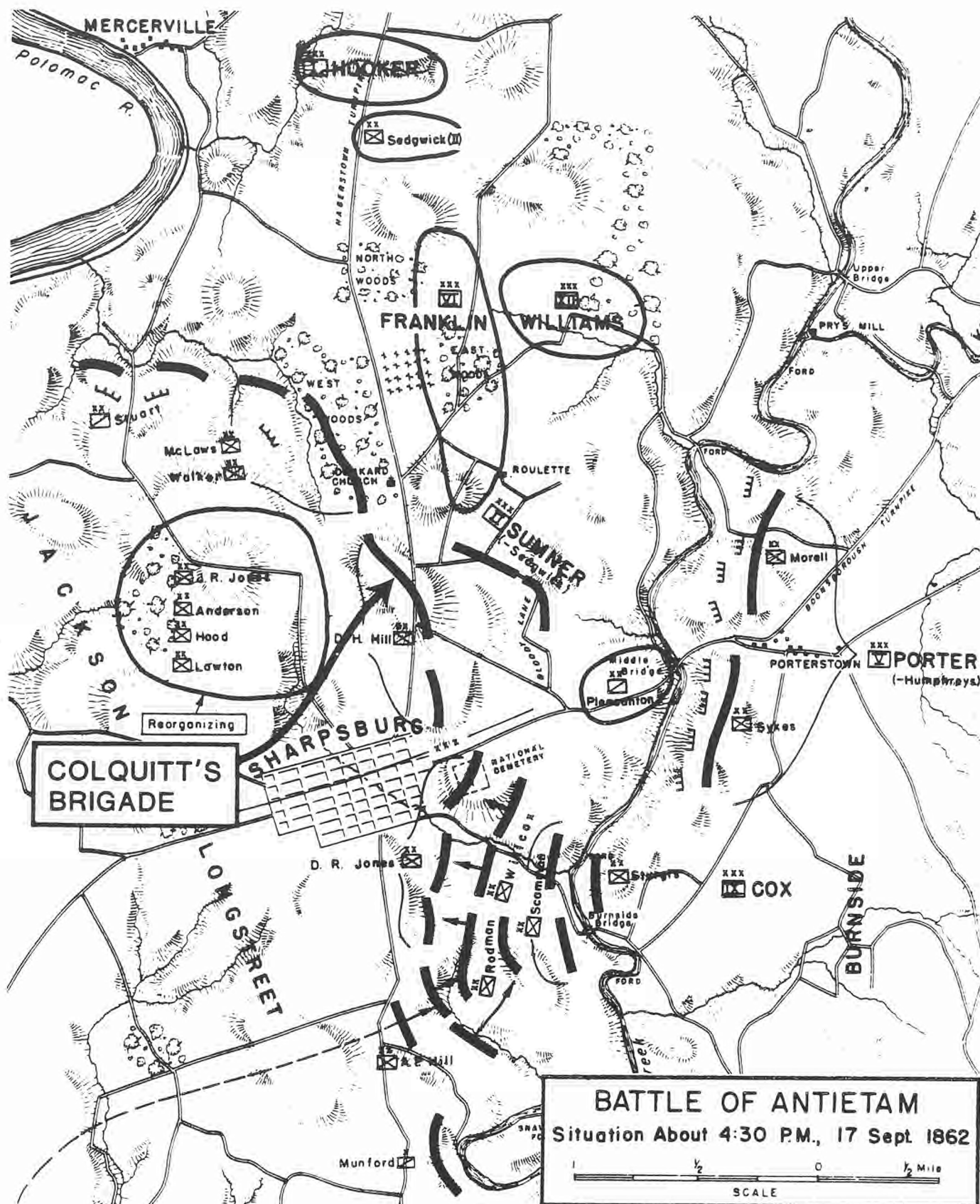
Still forward came the way of gray, still backward receded the billows of blue, heralded by warning hiss of the bullets, the sparkling of the rifle flashes, the purplish vapor settling like a veil over the lines, the mingled hurrahs [of the Yankees] and wild yells [of the Rebels], and the bass accompaniment over on our left of the hoarse cannonading. Back we went, stopping on every rise of ground to watch the battle. It was nearly night, the last gleam of the sun's rays struck upon the glass windows of the houses of the little village of Sharpsburg, and made them shine like fire, brighter, more vivid, than even the flames bursting from one house that had been set on fire by an exploding shell.

At last the bridge is reached [by the Rebels] -- the stone bridge that crosses Antietam creek -- the key point of the Federal position, the weak point in their line, the spot so anxiously watched by McClellan, for he sent repeated dispatches to Burnside late that evening, as A. P. Hill bore back the advancing tide -- his order WAS: "Hold on to the bridge at all hazards; if that bridge is lost all is lost." [49:19-20] {N.B. Once again Private Hunter's memory is faulty. There is no written record of such a statement by McClellan. Indeed, even had Burnside been driven back over the Lower (Antietam) Bridge, Lee hadn't enough men to pursue and defeat all the Federal reserves.}

A. P. Hill's men had burst onto the battlefield and their sudden, unexpected, vicious counterattack panicked the numerically superior Union troops and -- once more! -- the tide of battle changed. The Federals broke and ran back toward the Lower Bridge.

Although powerful ". . . Federal artillery continued to thunder across the hills [and though] heavy blue columns could still be seen in overmastering strength across Antietam Creek and far to the north" [88:445], the Union army and the Union generals had had it -- they simply quit fighting. And so did the exhausted Rebels; they, too, had had enough. {See Map 16, "Situation at 4:30 P.M.," next page.}

Let Private Hunter, the articulate Virginian, tell how he remembers the battle and its end:



BATTLE OF ANTIETAM
Situation About 4:30 P.M., 17 Sept 1862

1 1/2 0 1/2 Miles
SCALE

Here was the point [near the Lower Bridge where] Toombs' Georgians made such a gallant defence of the river early in the forenoon, and the dead lay thick all around.

But the battle in our front ceased suddenly, though on other parts of the field it still kept up. As we approached the bridge we were astonished to see so many [Federal] troops -- not a man under ten thousand said my comrade -- and they were all fresh troops. Certainly, there was no danger of Burnside losing the bridge, with all those splendid soldiers ready to defend it. Had those men advanced early in the day, instead of being held back [by McClellan], it would have been a black day for the South, and the Yankees would have gained a glorious victory, for we had no reserves, and A. P. Hill was miles away in morning.

The ground all about the bridge was covered with the dead and wounded, for the Yankees had established a sort of field hospital here, and the desperately hurt in the immediate front were left at this point. And, besides, a fierce struggle had occurred between Toombs and Burnside's corps, and though short it was sharp and bloody. The dead were many. A group of four figures in blue lay together just as they had fallen -- all killed by the explosion of a single shell. One of the Georgians lay on his face with his body almost in two parts, looking as if he had been run over by a train of [railroad] cars; a solid shot had struck him in the centre of the body. Another of Toombs' brigade was shot just as he was taking aim; one eye was still open, while the other was closed, and one arm was extended in a position of holding his rifle, which lay beside him on the ground. Death had been sudden, instantaneous and painless. The gun had been fired; a spasmodic contraction of the fingers had probably pressed the trigger and set loose the prisoned missile.

Night came at last, stopping the carnage of the dreadful day, and the tender, pitiful stars shone in the vast dome above and looked down upon the scene of desolation and death. The firing had ceased, and only

the sounds of the groans, unheard before, of the stricken, the maimed, the dying, and a murmuring breeze stealing across the hills in plaintive sympathy.

We were carried on the other side of the stream and placed among our other prisoners taken in the battle -- representatives from every command in our army -- numbering some five hundred, with about a dozen officers. A guard being placed around us, every man's freed spirit was soon soaring away whenever his fancy led him, and slumber for a time held all in her silken chain. [49:20-21]

The End of the Battle of Sharpsburg

The Battle of Sharpsburg, just as it started at sun up, ended at sun down, on September 17th, 1862. It was all over except for sporadic firing in the next 24 hours, when Lee recrossed the Potomac and returned to Virginia.

There was no military decision at the end of the battle, although Lee's withdrawal during the night of the 18th, after McClellan declined to renew the battle during the day of the 18th, left the battlefield and Sharpsburg in the hands of the Union army. Yet the Rebels, though they knew they hadn't won, never believed they had lost. One Reb, thirty-seven years later, wrote with some bitterness:

The battle of Sharpsburg is claimed as a Federal victory. Why, I do not know, except in that case we failed to drive the enemy entirely off the field, as we had done before, but all the 18th, the next day after the battle, we lay waiting for "Little Mac" to come out of his hold and try another tussle. As he refused to do this, General Lee retired on the night of that day, and then, for the first time, McClellan claimed his victory.

[62:212]

In that ex-Confederate's opinion,

Year by year the men who held the Southern Cross for four long, weary years against overwhelming odds, and whipped and killed more men than they at any time had in [their own Confederate army], are fast passing away, and it will be but a few years before all

of them shall have "passed over the river to rest under the shade of the trees."

I say "whipped," and say so deliberately; they never whipped us, but wore us out; and on April 8th and 9th of 1865, there was as much fight in the eight or ten thousand veterans who had followed General Lee to Appomattox as there had every been, and some as gallant stands made by these men then as can be found in the pages of history. We were overwhelmed by numbers in the army and by suffering and starvation at home, where such men as Sheridan and Sherman overran our country and devastated it so that "a crow flying over would have to carry his rations with him."
[62:217-218]

Years after the war, when it was for the most part agreed that Robert E. Lee was the best general on either side -- Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, and others not excepted, despite the fact Lee was eventually forced to surrender to Grant at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865 -- and that McClellan was not among the best of generals, Henry Kyd Douglas wrote that

A Northern critic, with some bitterness toward General McClellan has said that the battle of Antietam on the Union side was the grandest failure of the war. This may be well disputed and confuted. However on the Confederate side, Sharpsburg was unquestionably the best fought battle of the war. [30:174]

Apparently Lee agreed, for Alexander Hunter offers two similar quotations:

General Lee was often asked after the war which battle he was proudest of, and where he fought the greatest odds.

He always answered, Sharpsburg. . . [48:503]

and

General Lee was asked after Appomattox by a prominent lady in Alexandria which battle he felt most proud of, and he answered: "Sharpsburg, for I fought against

greater odds than in any [other] battle of the war." [50:38]

The Union soldier-historian, Francis Palfrey, crediting Lee's generalship rather than the fighting qualities of Johnny Reb vis a vis those of Billy Yank, said "There can be no doubt about the proposition that greater results were habitually achieved by a certain number of thousands or tens of thousands of Lee's army than by an equal number of the Army of the Potomac." [70:125]

Such comparisons are difficult, and if Antietam was not the best fought battle by the Rebels it was surely the most brutal -- more so, say, than Gettysburg or Vicksburg, which are often mentioned. The eminent Civil War historian, Bruce Catton, wrote that

[The Civil War] saw many terrible battles, and to try to make a ranking of them is just to compare horrors, but it may be that the battle of Antietam was the worst of all. It had, at any rate, the fearful distinction of killing and wounding more Americans in one day than any other fight in the war. . . .

American soldiers never fought harder than they did when they fought each other on September 17 on the outskirts of Sharpsburg. [19:429, 430]

After the Battle: The Burial of the Dead

The night after the battle, if absent shot, shell, and both the fear and reality of death or crippling wound, brought its own kind of fear, conflict, and pain. As Peter Stackpole put it,

As the merciful darkness settled over the blood-soaked fields . . . lantern-carrying litter bearers threaded their way among the dead and wounded. . . . It was of course impossible to immediately gather up . . . the man thousands who lay where they had fallen, calling piteously for water, for the loved ones at home, or, stoically, silently, waiting and hoping for help or even death to end their suffering. [79:436-437]

A Rebel officer who lived through that day and night said

The night after the battle of Sharpsburg was a

fearful one. Not a soldier, I venture to say, slept half and hour. Nearly all of them were wandering over the field, looking for their wounded comrades, and some of them, doubtless, plundering the dead bodies of the enemy left on the field. Half of Lee's army were hunting the other half. [30:174]

One wonders if Joseph Calhoun Burns' friends in the 13th Alabama were searching for him -- in the cornfield, in the West Woods, near the Hagerstown Pike, or in the Bloody Lane. Did they find him among the thousands, in blue and gray, who lay dead or dying on the battlefield? We will never know; once again, all we will ever know of his tragic, useless death is that the Division of Deceased Soldiers, Office of the Adjutant and Inspector General of the Confederate States of America reported on February 20, 1863 that Joseph Calhoun Burns was "Killed in battle, Sharpsburg, Md., Sept. 17th, 1862."

Francis Palfrey, himself wounded at Sharpsburg, wrote of that sad night, that

As the sun sank to rest on the 17th of September, the last sounds of battle along Antietam Creek died away. The cannon could at last grow cool, and unwounded men and horses could enjoy rest and food, but there were thousands, already sleeping the sleep that knows no waking, and many times as many thousands who were suffering all the agonies that attend on wounds. The corn and the trees, so fresh and green in the morning, were reddened with blood and torn by bullet and shell, and the very earth was furrowed by the incessant impact of lead and iron. The blessed night came, and brought with it sleep and forgetfulness and refreshment to many, but the murmur of the night wind, breathing over fields of wheat and clover, was mingled with the groans of the countless sufferers of both armies. Who can tell, who can even imagine, the horrors of such a night, while the unconscious stars shone above, and the unconscious river went rippling by. [70:124-125]

The battle, but not the horror, was over. But no one, not even General Lee, knew there would be no fighting on the morrow. Inded, Lee was prepared to fight again against even greater odds, for as he said to his general officers,

Gentlemen, we will not cross the Potomac tonight. You will go to your respective commands, strengthen your lines. Send two officers from each brigade towards the ford to collect your stragglers and get them up [to the line]. If McClellan wants to fight in the morning, I will give him battle again. Go! [65:291]

But McClelland had a different perspective, and he said that

After a night of anxious deliberation, and a full and careful survey of the situation and condition of our army, the strength and position of the enemy, I concluded that the success of an attack on the 18th was not certain. [93:65]

So McClellan was not willing to give battle the next day, as attested by Brigadier General Winfield S. Hancock who reported he had "... been directed in the morning [of the 18th], by orders from the commander-in-chief, not to precipitate hostilities. [93:280]

The result of Lee's inability to attack but willingness to fight, and McClellan's ability to attack but unwillingness to fight meant that, as Confederate General John G. Walker wrote,

During the whole of the 18th the two armies rested in the positions which they had occupied at the close of the battle [on the 17th]. There was a tacit truce, and Federal and Confederate burying-parties passed freely between the lines. [7:681]

The truce was tacit, not formal, and attempts to formalize it so the wounded could be removed and helped, and the dead identified and buried, were spoiled either by confusion or the bureaucratic rigidity of a Federal officer. Who knows how many wounded men died -- perhaps Joseph Calhoun Burns among them -- because rigidity and senseless protocol overcame common-sense and humanity?

An except from the report of a Federal commander in the *Official Records* of the Civil War recounts this tragic story:

In the afternoon, being informed that a flag of truce from the [Confederates] was in our front I [learned] that General Pryor appeared on the part of the enemy [so I sent our] General Meagher to communicate with him. . . It was then learned that no

flag [of truce] had been sent by the enemy, and that a misunderstanding had arisen on account of an unauthorized [truce] which had been made by the pickets of opposing forces (our own particularly in fault), ostensibly [!] for the purpose of collecting the wounded between our lines [93:280],

but the Federal commander soon put a stop to any humanity unsanctioned by protocol.

The best historian of Antietam, James V. Murfin, summarizes and concludes this dismaying story:

Brig. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock . . . was on the field at the Sunken Road with his men that afternoon when he was informed that a flag of truce from the enemy was coming toward his front. Hancock was a West Point man and a general who went by the books. If there was going to be any negotiating, it would be done with strict protocol. . . . Hancock had been riding the line, pistol in hand, chasing plunderers from his own division who were ghoulishly going through the pockets of the enemy dead. He was not letting anyone into that no man's land without proper permission; if not the Confederates, certainly not his own men. . . . Later another flag appeared, this time in the hands of a Confederate colonel [who] said he was there to collect the wounded under a previously arranged truce. [He was told] that it was in error, that no such truce existed, and again the Confederate went back; "in a few minutes hostilities recommenced. Subsequently a number of the enemy appeared in the corn-field in our front," wrote Hancock, "apparently for the purpose of collecting the dead, five of whom approached our picket line. At that moment several shots were delivered by their own sharpshooters, when the five men were arrested and sent to the rear as prisoners of war." Nerves were tense. The slightest suspicious movement brought on rapid retaliation. While this misunderstanding existed throughout the day and evening [of the 18th], hundreds of wounded, who might have been saved, died with help a few yards away. It was this way all along the lines. "It was a sickening sight," observed Maj. Von Borcke. "Many wounded still remained untended in their agony in out-of-the-way spots of the woods and corn-fields." [65:296-297]

Could it be that Hancock's tragic, inhuman decision cost Joseph Calhoun Burns his life? We know the records say he died of wounds suffered at Sharpsburg, which implies he was not killed outright. Could it be that one of his comrades in arms saw him wounded and suffering, and then saw him die? Could it be that he lay wounded in the field, was seen there, but could not be recovered and given medical attention which might have saved his life, had Hancock been a more humane and less rigid, rule-bound man? We will never know.

Informal truces to recover the wounded and bury the dead were not unusual. Bell Irvin Wiley, a distinguished historian of the common soldier in the Civil War, has shown that

On several occasions soldiers of the two armies intermingled after battle to bury the dead, laying the Confederates in one big grave and the Federals in another close by, with a chaplain of either army administering the last rites. [97:353]

Indeed, these truces sometimes involved more than a temporary pause in fighting to recover wounded and bury dead, and one occasion is recorded when in 1862

Colonel Wilder of the Federals proposed a truce for the burying of the dead. General Chalmers of the Confederates immediately acceded, but to his dismay he found that his men [had nothing to use] for the digging of graves . . . [so] he decided to call on the Yanks for assistance. Colonel Wilder very considerably lent spades for the burial of the Rebels. [98:317]

The rigidity and formalism of Union Brigadier General Hancock at Sharpsburg very likely cost some of wounded, Union and Confederate, their lives. No doubt it also meant that some of the dead who would have been identified by burying parties from their own troops, and reported as dead with grave sites identified, went unidentified, perhaps unburied for days, and with no way for sorrowing kin or friends to recover and re-bury bodies in home soil whether North or South.

Hancock's was a tragic, inhumane decision.

Perhaps the Federals were over-cautious, for they knew -- by experience -- Lee preferred the offensive to the defensive. As a matter of

fact Lee had made plans to attack the Union right flank on the 18th until he was convinced by "Stonewall" Jackson that with only some 24,000 men , all of whom were still exhausted from the great battle on the 17th, he could not hope to defeat McClellan's 75,000 men, almost half of whom were fresh, well-fed troops. {See L, Appendix.}

That afternoon, with no attack by the Federals and with no resistance from the Army of the Potomac, the Army of Northern Virginia, including the remnants of the 13th Alabama and the rest of Colquitt's Brigade, returned to Virginia -- but without Private Joseph Calhoun Burns. He was to remain in Maryland forever.

Of the 13th Alabama and its men, their divisional commander, Major General Daniel Harvey Hill, wrote: "The heroic Colonel [Burkitt D.] Fry, Thirteenth Alabama . . . who had . . . been wounded at Seven Pines, [was] once more wounded severely, at Sharpsburg, while nobly doing [his] duty. [93:1027]

He went on to say that among those deserving notice for their gallantry were

Lieuts. B. A. Bown, R. S. Tomme, and L. D. Ford, First Sergeant Herring, Sergts. J. L. Moore, T. P. W. Bulland, and J. J. Adams, Corpl. J. A. Lee, and Privates W. A. Estes, J. S. Wingate, W. S. Walker, Isaac Hundley, Thomas Sudler, J. J. Gordon, Simeon Williamson, Mosely, McCall, J. M. Vanse, J. Hutchings, Thomas Argo, J. S. Dennis, W. J. Claybanks, Joseph Herron, and W. D. Tingle, [all of the] Thirteenth Alabama. [93:1028]

There was no specific mention of Joseph Calhoun Burns, perhaps because -- unlike in the Union army -- neither company captains nor regimental colonels wrote battle reports which found their way into the *Official Records*. Thus there is no report from Colonel Fry, who commanded the 13th Alabama, nor from Captain Reaves, who commanded Company D, either of which might have contained a mention of Joseph Calhoun Burns.

For lack of that truce the day after the battle the Rebels were unable to bury their dead before they left Sharpsburg and the Antietam that night, and had to leave that to the Federals and the townspeople. The Union troops began burial details on the 19th and ". . . the task of burying the dead . . . on the battlefield was completed sometime late on September 21, 1862. . . . Understandably the weary Union

soldiers did not care about identifying the individual graves of the Confederate dead . . . [36:256, 104] and so American soldiers from the South, unlike American soldiers from North, who died at Sharpsburg mostly lie in unmarked graves. William Frassanito wrote that

Initially, bodies of both Confederate and Union soldiers were buried on battlefield where they fell, in either individual or mass graves . . . [and] most Confederate soldiers who fell at Antietam were buried in mass graves without any individual identification. For example, the grave marker would read "80 Rebels buried here." [36:115]

The graves of Union dead were less anonymous, and in 1865 after the Civil War the Northern States built a special graveyard, the Antietam National Cemetery, where the Union dead were gathered and reburied in individual sites. The Confederate dead were not welcome in the Antietam National Cemetery, or on the battlefield, so many of them were later reburied in cemeteries in Hagerstown, Maryland, particularly the Rose Hill Cemetery. {See M, Appendix.}

Before reburial in Hagerstown an attempt was made in 1869 to identify the Rebel dead still at Antietam. It was a near hopeless task -- too late, too little -- but it did identify where four men of the 13th Alabama had lain buried for at least seven years.

Those four were:

1. L. G. Burditt who, with some from the Georgia regiments in Colquitt's brigade, were

. . . buried west of George Line's house in his new ground along side of an old white oak tree near his pond and north of the road leading to his house. The ground is low and wet, and has been plowed. Graves pretty much exposed. [27:30-31]

2. J. Spradling, who perhaps later died of wounds, as he was "Buried in Rev. J. J. Adams town lot" [27:40] in Sharpsburg and not on the battlefield itself.

3. F. M. Carroway, of Company H, who may have been killed at the Battle of Boonsboro (or South Mountain) on September 14th and 15th, or who may have been moved from Antietam by friends of relatives, as his

grave was found "In Alms house lot at Hagerstown." [27:58]

4. J. W. Rintz, who may also have died at Boonsboro or have been moved from Antietam, as his body was found "Buried along the west side of, and in the cemetery at Frederick [Maryland], Boards [i.e., identification marker] up." [27:73]

There seems little doubt but that Joseph Calhoun Burns was one of those who was buried, unidentified, in a mass grave on the battlefield. We will never know where on that battlefield, nor do we know whether he was ever moved from there to another site in Hagerstown or Frederick.

The best we can do is to assume that wherever he fell at the Battle of Sharpsburg he fell with others in Colquitt's Brigade -- with those in the 6th, 23rd, 27th, and 28th Georgia along with the 13th Alabama. On that assumption, again referring to the 1869 or 1870 document which identified the battlefield burial place of some Rebels, it may be that Joseph Calhoun Burns was with others identified as in Colquitt's Brigade who were "... buried in George Line's orchard; some boards are still there. The graves have not been disturbed. [27:28] Or, perhaps, "... buried west of George Line's house in his new ground . . . north of the road leading to his house [27:30], where eleven from Colquitt's Brigade are identified: one [L. G. Burditt] from the 13th Alabama, two from the 6th Georgia, two from the 23rd Georgia, one from the 27th Georgia, and five from the 28th Georgia. [27:30]

Or, perhaps, "In D. R. Miller's 50 acre field, east side of the pike; the trenches can all be seen, although the field has been plowed; buried shallow. Bones exposed in places; trappings, &c., can be seen" where there are eighteen 'trenches supposed to contain 290 Unknown, [one of which is] containing 150 [including] Col. Colwell [and] Major Tracey [both of] 27th Ga." [27:55]

Or, perhaps, "In D. R. Miller's field east of pike and bordering on Smoketown road, buried shallow; exposed" together with "... Dr. R. Miller's field, west of pike and joining the woods; bones exposed, where there are 'Nine trenches supposed to contain 225 Unknown' plus another 'Eight trenches supposed to contain 305 Unknown.'" [27:56]

Or, several other places, including "... Samuel Mumma's field at the junction of Smoketown Road and pike," "Near graveyard in Samuel Mumma's field," "... Samuel Mumma's 1st field south of meadow," "In lower corner of Wm. Roulette's [Roulette's] along Bloody Lane," "In . . . Mumma's field joining Roulette's lane, S. E.

corner," and "In . . . Mumma's bear hold field." [27:36-37]

The 13th Alabama fought at all those places, and more, and Joseph Calhoun Burns could have fallen and been buried in a mass grave at any one of those places.

Again, we will never know.

But if a guess were to be made, perhaps it would be that he fell, and was buried in a mass grave, on Miller's cornfield or Miller's open field just south of the cornfield, both east of the Hagerstown Pike and north of the Smoketown Road. That is where the 5th Ohio captured the regimental battle flag of the 13th Alabama; and that is where over 300 unidentified Rebs -- but many identified as from Colquitt's brigade -- fell and were buried. It is a good a guess as any, and perhaps better than most.

It is sad that the body of Joseph Calhoun Burns could not be identified and recovered, to be taken home for burial in Randolph County.

Immediately after the battle the families of Union soldiers were permitted to look for their dead or wounded kin, to care for them or, in many cases, to take the body of a loved one home for burial. Perhaps the most well-known such trip was told by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., the famous author, who left Boston for Sharpsburg on September 18 to find his son, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (later to become one of the most famous members of the United States Supreme Court), on notification his son had been wounded. [44:743-744] {See N, Appendix.}

Confederate families, of course, had little such opportunity; and they were certainly not notified so promptly of casualties in Lee's army. One wonders when Joseph Calhoun Burns' wife and parents were told of his death. We know only that on November 4, 1962, his wife, Mary Ann Elizabeth West Burns, claimed the pay owed to him [Affidavit filed in Randolph County, Confederate State of Alabama; in National Archives], which amounted to \$102.73 [Final Statement of Deceased Soldiers Account, Confederate States of America, February 3, 1863; in National Archives], and that she collected the debt on July 28, 1864. [Confederate Archives, Chapter 10, File 26, page 11; from National Archives.]

Without doubt neither his wife nor his parents tried to recover his body for burial in Randolph County; it would have been impossible -- even if they had been notified immediately, which they were not, there would

not have known where to look on the battlefield even if they would have been permitted to look by the Union forces. No, it was impossible: they just had to accept the cruel fact that Joseph Calhoun Burns was dead and gone, denied the last rites in a Methodist Church -- Green's Chapel -- to which the Burns family belonged and in whose graveyard his parents, Edward and Nancy, would themselves be buried.

There is no physical memorial to Joseph Calhoun Burns -- nothing on the Antietam Battlefield, nothing in Green's Chapel cemetery. His reward was exactly as Confederate General Fitzhugh Lee described it for any, each, every, private soldier in the Confederate army:

If saved from the dangers of the contest, his reward was the commendation of his immediate commanding officers and conscientiousness of duty faithfully performed. If drowned amid the hail of shot and shell, his hastily buried body filled a nameless grave, without military honors and without religious ceremonies. No pages of history recounted in lofty language his courage on the field or his devotion to his country, or described how, like a soldier, he fell in the fore-front of battle. His battle picture, ever near the flashing of the guns, should be framed in the memory of all who admire true heroism, whether found at the cannon's mouth, or in the blade of the cavalry, or along the blazing barrel of the infantry. There he stood, with the old, torn slouch hat, the bright eye, the cheek colored by exposure and painted by excitement, the face stained with powder, with jacket rent, trousers torn and the blanket in shreds, printing in the dust of battle the tracks of his shoeless feet. No monument can be built high enough to commemorate the memory of a typical representative private soldier of the South.

[23:7]

It is true that "No monument can be built high enough to commemorate the memory . . ." of Joseph Calhoun Burns. He needed none, for he found immortality in the mind and memory, while they lived, of his parents, Edward Robertson Burns and Nancy Ann Norris Mathews Burns; of his lone surviving brother and sister, Edward Samuel Burns and Mary Jane Burns West Latimer; and of his wife, Mary Ann Elizabeth West Burns, and their three children, William Ephriam Burns, Joseph Edward Burns, and Mary Roseanna Jane Burns.

Nor does he need one now, in 1985, some 150 years after his birth in Abbeville, South Carolina, and over 120 years after his death at Sharpsburg, Maryland, because his immortality remains in the minds and memories of we who are his descendents and his kinfolk.

Kith and kin, family, is the constant in all our lives; and generations past, present, and future emerge from the roots of family, live lives as members of family, and after death retain their individual identities as members of a family.

So it is with Joseph Calhoun Burns. So it is with all of us. We are family.

APPENDIX

{A} Many battles during the Civil War were known by the Union under one name and by the Confederates under another name. As a general tendency, the Union forces tended to name battles after geographic features while the Confederate forces tended to name them after nearby cities, towns, or villages.

Thus, for example, the Union forces refer to the First (or Second) Battle of Bull Run, while the Confederate forces refer to First (or Second) Manassas. Similarly: Seven Pines or Fair Oaks, Blackford's Ford or Shepardstown, South Mountain or Boonsboro, and, of course, Antietam or Sharpsburg.

This difference in nomenclature is said to exist because the Northern soldiers' experience was primarily urban or suburban and, on the theory that what is unusual is intriguing, chose names from physical or geographic features. Southern soldiers, on the other hand, were said to have primarily rural experience and, also intrigued by what was unusual to them, chose nearby population centers as battle site names.

{B} Commentary on the "lost order" of General Robert E. Lee is extensive, and dates from as early as September 1862 to the present time. Three of the best analyses, in this writer's opinion, are to be found in Douglas S. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants* (Volume II); James V. Murfin, *The Gleam of Bayonets*; and Hal Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill*. (General Hill, of course, was commandant of the Division in which Joseph Calhoun Burns and the 13th Alabama Regiment served.)

{C} Commentary has also been extensive on the relative strength of Lee's and McClellan's forces at the Battle of Sharpsburg on September 17, 1862. Lee said he had 35,255 Confederates there, while McClellan says he had 87,164 Federals there.

Professor Jay Luvas, perhaps the most reliable source on such statistics, says Lee had about 40,000 to McClellan's 87,000 troops, and that is the generally accepted ratio: two Yankees to each Rebel.

It is interesting to note that McClellan estimated Lee had 97,445 troops available at Antietam, which is well over twice as many as Lee actually had. McClellan, however, had consistently, for whatever reason -- faulty military intelligence or conservative military strategy -- overestimated opposing forces.

{D} No one knows with certainty how many were killed, missing in action, and wounded in action at Antietam. Thomas Livermore, an earlier scholar on the battle, and who took part in it on the Union side, estimated that the Confederates suffered a total of 13,724 casualties to 12,410 for the Federals, for a total of 26,134.

Jay Luvas estimates that the Confederates suffered 10,700 and the Federals 12,410, for a total of 23,110 casualties.

Based on Luvas' figures, a breakdown of casualties might look like this:

	<u>Lee</u>	<u>McClellan</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Killed in Action</u>	1,061	2,108	3,169
<u>Missing in Action</u>	<u>1,095</u>	<u>753</u>	<u>1,848</u>
<u>Total Dead</u>	2,156	2,861	5,017

<u>Wounded in Action</u>	<u>8,544</u>	<u>9,549</u>	<u>18,093</u>
<u>Total Casualties</u>	10,700	12,410	23,110

{E} After the election of 1860, and consistently prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, President Lincoln and his Republican Party agreed that the Constitution of the United States prohibited Congress from abolishing slavery in those states whose laws permitted it. [See * at the end of this comment.]

In the early days of the Civil War radical Republicans argued that Lincoln, by use of Executive war powers, could and should abolish all slavery in all of the states, North and South, once and for all. Conservative Republicans, Lincoln included, even as late as his message to Congress in December of 1861 (after the Civil War had started) believed the basic purpose of the war was to restore the Union and that, in turn, meant the restoration of the *status quo ante* with respect to slavery in those states which permitted it before the war.

By July of 1862, just before the Battle of Sharpsburg, Lincoln had come to agree with the radical Republicans and, in August of 1862, he was searching for the proper moment to issue an Emancipation Proclamation which he had already written. On September 20, 1862, he issued his statement, which declared that if the southern states did not rescind their acts of secession and rejoin the Union within 100 days he would order the Union armies to free all slaves.

The southern states did not, of course, comply so, on January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued his final Emancipation Proclamation which freed all slaves except in those slave states which were loyal to the Union (e.g., Maryland, Tennessee, and those parts of Virginia and Louisiana occupied by Union forces).

After the Civil War all slavery was abolished, whether north or south.

For an excellent summary of these points see Stephen B. Oates, "The Slaves Freed," *American Heritage*, Volume 32, No. 1 (December 1980), pp. 74-83.

Shortly after Lincoln's election in 1860 the Southern states began, one by one, to hold elections of the issue of whether or not a state should secede from the Union. Despite the belief still widespread throughout the nation, and even held by many in Alabama, including some in Randolph County, that all Southern states and counties were in 1860 overwhelmingly populated by blacks and therefore whites were all but unanimous for secession, the facts do not support this common belief. The following tables summarize the data for Alabama and Randolph County:

ALABAMA POPULATION, 1860

	<u>Statewide</u>		<u>Randolph County</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Whites	526,431	54.6	18,132	90.4
Slaves	435,080	45.1	1,904	9.4
Free Blacks & Indians	<u>2,690</u>	<u>.2</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>.1</u>
TOTALS	964,201	99.9	20,059	99.9

(Of the 52 Alabama counties in 1860, Randolph County was fifth lowest in the number of slaves held. It was not a large slave holding county.)

ALABAMA CONVENTION, 1860 ELECTION OF DELEGATES

	<u>Statewide</u>		<u>Randolph County</u>
	<u>No. Counties</u>	<u>No. Votes</u>	<u>No. Votes</u>
For Remaining in Union	23	28,630	1,303
For Secession from Union	<u>29</u>	<u>36,898</u>	<u>1,109</u>
TOTALS	52	65,528	2,412

(It is of interest to note that, while the State of Alabama as a whole voted for secession from the United States, Randolph County voted to remain in the United States. *One wonders how Edward Robertson Burns and Joseph Calhoun Burns (the only eligible voters in the family in 1860) voted in the election.*)

{F} That the stalemate at Antietam deprived the Confederate States of America of recognition by European powers is abundantly evidenced by the closing sentence of Prime Minister Palmerston's letter to Foreign Minister Russell, dated October 2, 1862, after Antietam and the issuance of Lincoln's preliminary Emancipation Proclamation of September 20, 1862. Said the Prime Minister to his Foreign Minister: "The whole matter is full of difficulty, and can only be cleared up by some more decided events between the contending parties."

{G} The 1st Division of Major General Hooker's I Corps was commanded by Brigadier General Abner Doubleday, he who is credited with 'inventing' the game of baseball.

{H} The history of the 13th Alabama, as published in [I7:610-612], is:

The Thirteenth was organized at Montgomery, July 19, 1861, and at once proceeded to Virginia. Ordered to Yorktown, it was there brigaded under Gen. Rains. It lay at that place till the army fell back on Richmond the following spring. At Seven Pines the regiment was engaged warmly [where James Thomas Burns was mortally wounded], and the casualties were 7 killed and 45 wounded. Held in reserve during the battles in front of Richmond, it was nevertheless subjected there to a destructive fire, from which it suffered severely. As part of Archer's brigade, under Colquitt of Georgia, the regiment took part in the first Maryland campaign, losing lightly at Boonsboro, but heavily at Sharpsburg [where Joseph Calhoun Burns was killed]. The winter was passed on the Rappahannock, and its monotony was relieved by the frightful repulse of [Union Major General] Burnside at Fredericksburg, of which the Thirteenth was a witness. Col. Fry led the brigade in the assault on [Union General] Hooker at Chancellorsville, and there the Thirteenth lost half of the 460 men with which it went into battle. It was in the Pennsylvania campaign, and at Gettysburg its colors were planted on the crest of the ridge, where they were torn to shreds, and the regiment was again terribly mutilated. Returning to Virginia, the Thirteenth passed the winter of 1863-'4 mostly in camp. At the Wilderness [Campaign] the regiment actively participated, and the loss was comparatively heavy. It took part in the subsequent operations around Petersburg, being now in the brigade of Gen. Sanders of Greene -- the Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, and Fourteenth Alabama regiments -- subsequently commanded by Gen. W. H. Forney of Calhoun. Under Col. Aiken the remnant of about 100 men surrendered at Appomattox. Of the 1,245 men on its rolls, about 150 were killed in battle, or died of wounds, 275 died of disease, 64 were transferred, and 202 were discharged.

{I} A Confederate veteran, Alexander Hunter, says "There is a peculiar tuneful pitch in the flight of these little leaden balls: a musical ear can study the different tones as they skim through space. A comrade lying next to me, an amateur musician of no mean merit, spoke of this. Said he, 'I caught the pitch of that minnie that just passed. It was a swell from E flat to F, and as it retrograded in the distance [it] receded to a D -- a very pretty change.'"

{J} The Battle of Sharpsburg was, indeed, the single bloodiest day of battle in American history. As William Frassanito puts it, ". . . more Americans were killed and wounded on September 17, 1862, than on any other day in our history. . . . [T]he total American casualty figures for D-Day [the invasion of France on June 6, 1944, in World War II] did not exceed 6,700 killed, wounded, and missing . . . Hence, in terms of American losses, for any single day in history, including all wars and

disasters, September 17, 1862, was America's bloodiest day."

{K} There is some confusion as to the exact time the 13th Alabama entered the fight at Sharpsburg. Francis Palfrey, perhaps the best 19th Century historian of that battle said Colquitt ". . . probably puts the hour too early" when Colquitt, in his official report said he advanced at 7:00 A.M. Palfrey thinks it was closer to 8:00 A.M. But most contemporary scholarship seems either to accept Colquitt's own estimate of 7:00 A.M. or puts it a little later, perhaps about 7:30 A.M.

{L} If Lee had 35,255 men at dawn on September 17th, and if he lost 10,700 by sunset, then he had 24,555 available to fight on the 18th. If McClellan had 87,164 at dawn and lost 12,410 by sunset, then he had 74,754 available on the 18th. His fresh troops were 12,800 from Major General Fitz-Hugh Porter's V Corps, 12,000 from Major General William B. Franklin's VI Corps, and 6,000 newly arrived troops under command of Major General Andrew A. Humphreys.

On those odds it is reasonable to conclude that Lee could not hope to defeat McClellan had either renewed the battle on the morning of September 18th. It is probably reasonable to say that, had either -- particularly McClellan -- renewed the battle on the 18th, then the Army of the Potomac should have easily defeated the Army of Northern Virginia: while Lee, with troop strength on the 17th at two-to-one against him, had fought to a draw, could he have done as well on the 18th when troop strength would have been three-to-one against him? Probably not, even though the Rebels were better fighters man-to-man than the Federals, and even though Lee was by far the superior general to McClellan.

{M} One can fairly conclude that Confederate soldiers were discriminated against when it came to burial, or reburial, in the Antietam National Cemetery. Perhaps, given the tenor of the times, that is understandable.

The 1865 *Charter of the Antietam National Cemetery* called for ". . . ten acres of land -- a part of the battle field of Antietam -- as a burial and final resting place for [all] of the soldiers who fell in the battle. . . . [with t]he remains of the Confederate army to be buried in a part of the grounds separate from those of the Union Army."

The Union dead, some 5,000, were reinterred in the Antietam National Cemetery but the Rebel dead were not, as they were supposed to be. Thus, at a meeting of the Trustees of the Antietam National Cemetery, on December 7, 1867, a motion was made and passed for the implementation of Section 4 of the Charter, which called for reburial of the Rebel dead in the National Cemetery. This action was prompted by a letter from R. E. Fenton, then Governor of New York State who, on September 3, 1867, wrote the Trustees to say that his State had paid its share of the cost of the Antietam National Cemetery and he was upset that ". . . the right to have the Confederate dead buried in the Antietam Cemetery . . ." had yet to be honored, and he wanted something done about it. In his letter he said (in part):

[This *Charter*] declares "And it shall be [the Trustees' duty] to remove the remains of all the soldiers . . . and to have them properly interred in the [Antietam National Cemetery]. The remains of the soldiers of the Confederate Army to be buried in a part of the grounds, separate from those of the Union Army. . . ." [The italic emphasis is in Governor Fenton's letter.]

It appears . . . 3,580 [from the North] were interred [by June 5, 1867 and t]he total number of burials have since been increased . . . to 4,695. I am also advised that no provision has been made . . . for a separate plot in the Cemetery to be devoted to the burial of the Confederate dead and that no Confederate dead have been buried therein [because of the Federal government, so as trustees you have to do something about it]. . . .

When we recall the . . . magnanimity that presided at [the close of the

war]; when we remember [we] are now engaged in the work of reconstructing the Union on the basis of universal freedom and with an earnest desire to restore to the Southern States a prosperity [greater] than that which slavery and rebellion conspired to destroy, it is impossible to believe [either the Federal government or the Trustees] would desire to make an invidious distinction against the mouldering remains of the Confederate dead, or that they would disapprove of their being carefully gathered from the spots where they fell, and laid to rest in the National Cemetery on the battlefield of Antietam.

Conquerors as we were . . . our stern disapproval of [the Confederate] cause . . . need not forbid our admiration of the bravery with which they died. They were Americans, misguided indeed and misled, but still our countrymen. . .

To-day nothing perhaps could sooner awaken a national spirit in the heart of the South than the thought that . . . the Northern States were gathering the remains of [the South's] fallen sons for interment in [the same] National Cemetery. . . .

[And if the Federal government won't do anything to honor this vision of a re-United States or the *Charter* which requires it, then] I think . . . the Trustees [themselves should do it.]

But Governor Fenton's moving appeal achieved nothing other than motions from the Trustees, most of which, in effect, said "Yes, we're legally obliged to do it but, no, we won't do it." They didn't, and nothing happened until 1869 when ". . . the exposed and neglected condition of the Confederate dead [was so bad] that many of the trenches and graves were so washed that the bones were laid bare, and in some instances the remains had been turned over by the plow."

Then, more than seven years after the battle, five years after the *Charter*, and four years after the end of the war, two people [two!] were paid ". . . to go over the battlefield and mound up the trenches and graves [of the Confederates], and also to make careful notes of their location, and as far as possible identify the dead." At that late date, under those conditions, and with only two men -- both just citizens, and neither an expert in identification -- little could be done.

Their efforts did result in a little pamphlet, probably published in 1869 or 1870 (it is undated), which identified a very few of the Southerners in Lee's army who were killed in Maryland in September of 1862.

{N} The search of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., for his son, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., is both interesting and touching. For further information two good sources are Anna H. K. Findlay, "Where the Captain was Found, *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Volume XXXIII (June 1938), and Mark DeWolfe, Jr. (Editor), *Touched with Fire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947.

{O} Descriptions of Photographs:

Joseph Calhoun Burns, 1st Frontspiece: While the date and place of this photograph are unknown it was probably taken in late summer of 1861, shortly after he and his younger brother, James Thomas Burns, arrived in Montgomery from Wedowee to enlist in the 13th Alabama Volunteer Infantry Regiment (which consisted of volunteers from Randolph County) on July 19, 1861. Mr. Bill Burns of Montgomery was kind enough to make this photograph available.

Joseph Calhoun Burns, 2nd Frontspiece: This pencil sketch, made from a photograph -- perhaps but not surely the same one as the 1st Frontspiece -- was commissioned by Mrs. Clifford (Lucy Lee) Washington, of Roanoke, Alabama, who was generous enough to make it available.

Antietam Bridge, following page 5: This photograph of the middle of the three bridges

crossing Antietam Creek was taken on September 22, 1862. Exactly one week earlier, on September 15, at dawn, fourteen Confederate brigades containing over 10,000 men under the commands of Generals Longstreet and Hill crossed this bridge on the way to Sharpsburg. Among them was the 13th Alabama and Joseph Calhoun Burns, and the bridge in the photograph is just as he saw it.

Main Street, Sharpsburg, following page 8: This photograph, taken on September 21, 1862, looks West down Main Street. It was probably over this road that the 13th Alabama, and Joseph Calhoun Burns, marched after crossing the Antietam Bridge on their way through Sharpsburg to the Potomac River before they returned to the outskirts of Sharpsburg where they camped on the evening of September 15.

Main Street, Sharpsburg, following page 8: Taken at the same time as the other photograph of Main Street, this one also looks West. While its main feature is the Lutheran Church in Sharpsburg, the house just down the street from the Church is the same house as in the left foreground of the other photograph.

Edward Robertson Burns, following page 21: This photograph of the father of Joseph Calhoun Burns was most likely, but not surely, taken sometime between 1875 and 1880 in Randolph County, probably in Wedowee. The photograph was made available by the courtesy of Mr. Bill Burns.

Edward Samuel Burns, following page 25: The brother of Joseph Calhoun Burns and James Thomas Burns, and the youngest son of Edward Robertson Burns and Nancy Ann Norris Mathews Burns, Edward Samuel Burns was the only one of the three brothers to fight in and live through the Civil War. This photograph was probably, but not surely, taken between 1910 and 1914, most likely at or near Burns Mill, outside Wedowee. The photograph was made available by the courtesy of Mr. J. C. Marion.

Dead Confederate Soldiers on Mumma's Farm, following page 33: Taken on September 19, 1862, the photograph shows casualties on the property of Samuel Mumma, in his field next to and Southwest of the Smoketown Road {See Map 3, following page 6}. On September 17, 1862, before they entered actual combat, this field was the staging ground for the regiments of Colquitt [including the 13th Alabama and Joseph Calhoun Burns], Garland, and Ripley. These three regiments, although not yet in combat, were exposed to Federal artillery fire from the other side of Antietam Creek. Some of the dead Rebels shown may have been from the 13th Alabama.

Dead Confederate Soldier on Mumma's Farm, following page 33: Taken at the same time and almost the same place at the photograph above, the same comments apply. This photograph of a lone Southern soldier illustrates most dramatically the horror of the Battle of Sharpsburg.

Battleflag of the 13th Alabama Volunteer Infantry Regiment, following page 46: This photograph of the "Stars and Bars" battleflag of the 13th Alabama was but one of many flown by the Regiment. This is one of the later, but not the last, flag carried into battle by the 13th Alabama. This flag was carried after the 13th had engaged in battles at Cold Harbor, Malverne Hill, Seven Pines (where James Thomas Burns received fatal wounds), Mechanicsville, South Mountain, Sharpsburg (where Joseph Calhoun Burns lost his life), and Chancellorsville, but before the 13th had been in the Battle of Gettysburg. This flag is similar to the battleflag of the 13th Alabama that was lost in the fight in Miller's cornfield at Sharpsburg, when it was captured by Private John Murphy of the 5th Ohio. This photograph was made available by the courtesy of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

Confederate Dead in the Bloody Lane, following page 65: Taken only one day after General Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia had slipped across the Potomac back into Virginia on September 18, 1862, this photograph of Rebel dead in the Bloody Lane looks to the Southeast {See Map 7, following page 30}. The Sunken Road, which became known as Bloody Lane, was attacked in the forenoon by Union forces under French, Richardson, Caldwell, and Barlow. It was defended by Rodes, G. B. Anderson, and the remnants of Colquitt's Brigade (including, perhaps, the 13th

Alabama). The dead shown in the photograph are probably, but not positively, from the 14th North Carolina, of Anderson's Brigade.

Confederate Dead in the Bloody Lane, following page 65: Taken at the same time and at about the same place as the photograph above, the same comments apply.

{P} Description of Battle Maps:

Map 1, Antietam Campaign: Situation on the Evening of 13 September 1862, following page 1: This map shows the positions of Union and Confederate forces after General Lee's order had been lost and recovered by McClellan, as Lee's forces were moving toward Sharpsburg after they had defeated the Union at Harper's Ferry.

General Daniel Harvey Hill's troops, including Colquitt's Brigade and the 13th Alabama, and therefore Joseph Calhoun Burns, are shown at Boonsboro or South Mountain, where they fought to delay McClellan's movement toward Sharpsburg.

Map 2, Antietam (Sharpsburg) and Vicinity, following page 1: This map shows the principal geographic features, major cities, and previous battlegrounds as they were in relation to Sharpsburg.

Map 3, The Antietam Battlefield, following page 5: This map illustrates the primary reference points (e.g., West Woods, East Woods, Dunker Church, Miller's cornfield, the Sunken Road or Bloody Lane, and the Lower Bridge -- now known as Burnside Bridge) of the Battle of Sharpsburg.

Map 4, Movements of the 13th Alabama at the Battle of Sharpsburg, following page 18: This map tries to show where the 13th Alabama, including Joseph Calhoun Burns, was at important times and places during the Battle of Sharpsburg. The heavily dotted line traces those movements, while boxes with arrows show direction, time, and date.

The movements of the 5th Ohio Regiment, which captured the battleflag of the 13th Alabama in Miller's cornfield, are shown by a broken line with arrows indicating direction of movement.

Map 5, Situation at 6:00 A.M., 16 September, following page 18: The map shows the position of the 13th Alabama in defense line General Lee had established and the location of the Federal forces as they moved toward Sharpsburg for the battle.

Map 6, Antietam Battlefield: Close-up, following page 27: This is a close-up view of Map 3, and shows the features of the battlefield except for the Lower Bridge.

Map 7, Antietam Battlefield: Closer-up, following page 27: This is an even closer-up view of Map 3, showing the battlefield features from the Dunkard Church to Miller's cornfield.

Map 8, Situation at Dawn, 17 September, following page 31: This illustrates the positions of the Union and Confederate armies just before the Battle of Sharpsburg began. The 13th Alabama, and Joseph Calhoun Burns, is located on Roulette's farm where the night of the 16th had been spent.

Map 9, Situation at 8:00 A.M., following page 38: This shows the positions of the two armies after Hood's furious charge had been beaten back and Colquitt (including the 13th Alabama and Joseph Calhoun Burns), Garland, and Ripley of Hill's Division -- led by the 13th Alabama -- are moving into Miller's cornfield.

Map 10, Situation at 8:00 A.M.: Close-up, following page 38. This is a close-up view of Map 9, and shows more clearly the movement of Colquitt, led by the 13th Alabama and Joseph Calhoun Burns, into Miller's cornfield where the fiercest fighting of the Battle of Sharpsburg was to take place.

Map 11, Situation Between 8:30 A.M. and 8:40 A.M., following page 40: This map

shows Colquitt, Garland, and Ripley in retreat from the cornfield. The 5th Ohio, of Tyndale's Regiment, is shown in position after it had captured the battleflag of the 13th Alabama.

Map 12, Situation Between 8:30 A.M. and 8:40 A.M.: Close-up, following page 40: This is a close-up view of the heart of Map 11, and shows more clearly the positions of the 13th Alabama and the 5th Ohio after their hand-to-hand combat in Miller's cornfield.

Map 13, Situation About 9:00 A.M., following page 42: This map shows the positions of the Union and Confederate forces after the struggle in Miller's cornfield and between the East and West Woods, and shortly before the struggle for control of the Sunken Lane.

Map 14, Situation About 10:00 A.M., following page 51: This shows the positions of the Federals and Rebels during the fight for the Bloody Lane. The 13th Alabama, along with the balance of Colquitt's Brigade, is posted right in the Boody Lane.

Map 15, Situation About Noon, following page 61: This map shows the positions of the two armies after the Union had captured the Bloody Lane but before fight for the Lower (Burnside) Bridge had begun. Colquitt's Brigade and the 13th Alabama, perhaps with the exception of a few individual soldiers, are now out of the Battle of Sharpsburg, reorganizing on Piper's farm adjacent to the Hagerstown Pike.

Map 16, Situation About 4:30 P.M., following page 72: This final map illustrates the positions of the Union's Army of the Potomac and Confederacy's Army of Northern Virginia after the Battle of Sharpsburg on September 17, 1862. The Union had forced the Confederates back toward Sharpsburg, from the North, East, and South, but had not captured the town nor defeated the Rebels. The Confederates had successfully defended Sharpsburg, and kept open its line to Virginia, but had not defeated the Federals. The next evening, of September 18, 1862, after McClellan declined to renew the attack, Lee and his troops left the battlefield and slipped back across the Potomac into Virginia.

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